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University of Alberta

Altamirano and German Culture

by

Gabriele Alber ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in

Comparative Literature

Department of Modern Languages and Comparative Studies

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 1995

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Date: October 3, 1995

Ah tlamiz noxochiuh,
ah tlamiz nocuic.
In noconyayehua zan nicuicanitl.
Xexelihui, ya moyahua.
Cozahua ya xochitl
zan ye on calaquilo
zacuan calitic.

No acabarán mis flores,
no cesarán mis cantos.
Yo cantor los elevo,
se reparten, se esparcen.
Aun cuando las flores
se marchitan y amarillecen,
serán llevadas allá,
al interior de la casa
del ave de plumas de oro.

Nezahualcóyotl

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Altamirano and German Culture" submitted by Gabriele Alber in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Comparative Literature.

Milan V. Dimić
Prof. Milan V. Dimić

Prof. Paul A. Robberecht

Prof. Richard A. Young

Date: September 8, 1995

En homenaje a Ignacio M. Altamirano y

a la tierra que lo vio nacer.

Abstract

After attaining its independence from Spain in 1821, Mexico was confronted with the task of defining for itself a new political, social and cultural identity. Mexico's history in the 19th century can best be described as a period of constant political and social upheaval: the birth of a new nation was neither easy nor peaceful. Mexico's search for its own form of literary expression followed a similar road. For a long time, Mexico's literature continued to be heavily dependent on foreign models. Ignacio M. Altamirano (1834-93) was the first to recognize the need to move away from foreign influences, and also the first to formulate and implement a program for the creation of an autonomous literature. An integral part of his philosophy was the notion that any aspiring new writer should acquire a broad knowledge of Western literature, but at the same time be wary of the dangers of imitation. Altamirano's critical writings and in particular his works of narrative fiction are evidence of the profound commitment with which he worked towards the establishment of a "national literature". Not enough attention has been paid so far to the fact that all but two of Altamirano's works of narrative fiction contain specific references, quotations, and in some cases allusions to German novelists, poets, and dramatists belonging to the period of ca. 1780-1850. The significance of these references shall be explored in the present thesis, together with a possible solution to the mystery surrounding the origin of Altamirano's tale "Las tres flores".

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Introduction

Prior to independence, Spain controlled most of Mexico's political, economic, religious, and cultural life. Almost all of the reading material available in Mexico came from Spain. Other European, non-Spanish works were rarely known. The loss of a substantial number of colonies during the early part of the 19th century, however, weakened Spain's position as a political and economic world-power, affecting also its capacity as a cultural leader. After attaining political independence from Spain, Mexico was confronted with the task of finding and redefining a cultural identity of its own. Without guidance and without a literary tradition to fall back on, Mexico became an easy target for all kinds of foreign influences. Research indicates that French literature and French language translations were the most prominent influence in Mexico at the time. This fact, however, should not deter critics from realizing that there were other literatures, such as German literature, which also had a substantial impact on the development of writing in Mexico. There is, as will be explored in this study, enough evidence to indicate a strong connection between Germany and Mexico during the second half of the 19th century. To a great extent, it was Ignacio Manuel Altamirano (1834-93) who was responsible for the introduction of German literature to Mexico. Before the publication of Altamirano's journal El renacimiento in 1869, not many Mexican scholars had given thought to the study of German letters.

Although he is not considered a household name anymore, Altamirano was one of Mexico's most prominent and respected personalities during the last century. The contributions he made to his country as journalist, poet, novelist, literary historian, literary critic, teacher, politician, and reformer of the public school system are invaluable. The following lines provide a concise, but nonetheless accurate picture of Altamirano's life and work:

> Este admirable prohombre, indio puro, que nace en 1834, y que a los 14 años todavía no sabe español, porque sus humildes padres no podían darle educación, llega a ser el "líder" y unificador de todos los movimientos literarios de su época. El será el maestro de dos generaciones, tratará de crear una literatura nacional propia, sin sacrificar por eso, en aras de un estrecho espíritu nacionalista, la gran enseñanza europea, la fuente común de la cultura occidental.
>
> (Bopp, Contribución al estudio de las letras alemanas en México 144)

The role played by Altamirano in the shaping of Mexico's literature during the second half of the 19th century was without precedent: he was the first to consciously propose a program for the development of a uniquely Mexican form of expression. Even though he warned against the indiscriminate borrowing of foreign material, he encouraged his fellow writers to study the masterpieces of European and Classic literature and to apply the same degree of originality and perfection to their own works. It is amazing to see how many references to foreign literatures (especially French, English, Spanish, Italian, and German) are contained in Altamirano's own critical writings and novels. These references point to the fact that Altamirano had studied the foreign literatures available to him with great dedication, and that he was quite well versed in the subject.

Although it is almost impossible to overlook the fact that there are many foreign references contained in Altamirano's work, no specific studies have been devoted to the subject. One of the reasons might be that the study of comparative literature in general, and the study of literary influences and intertextualities in particular, is a relatively new discipline in Latin America. Europe's interest in Latin American studies is also fairly recent compared to the study of inter-European literary relations. European scholars interested in the subject are often confronted with material difficulties such as nonexistent or untraceable records. In turn, the lack of funding and of adequate research facilities has not encouraged many native Latin American scholars to pursue the subject.

There are additional factors that have complicated the study of Latin American-European literary influences. In his article "Influencias, imitaciones, concordancias y factores especificantes en el diálogo cultural entre Francia (o Europa) y América Latina", Ch. Minguet explains that the literary exchange that occured between Latin America and Europe did not follow the same pattern as the exchange that took place among European countries. First of all, there was usually a considerable delay, sometimes of decades, between the original date of publication of a particular work in Europe, its first appearance in the New World, and the time of its actual impact on the letters of a particular Latin American country.[1] Jorge Isaacs's famous sentimental novel María (Colombia, 1867), for example, is heavily indebted to the French romantics Bernardin de Saint Pierre, Chateaubriand, and Lamartine. Isaacs wrote his novel 70 years after the publication of Bernardin de Saint Pierre's Paul et Virginie, and approximately 40 years after the apparition of the works of Lamartine (Minguet 107). By that time those works had already lost most of their appeal in Europe.

The second phenomenon affecting the study of the influence of Europe on Latin American literature is what Minguet defines as "mestizaje literario" (107). It can be very difficult to identify individual influences, since Latin American authors often combined elements belonging to several epochs, movements, and countries, including their own, in a rather indiscriminate fashion. Minguet appropriately classifies these works as literary "hybrids". A good illustration of this kind of *mestizaje* is Lizardi's novel El periquillo samiento, published in 1816. Lizardi's work contains elements from the following European traditions: the Spanish picaresque novel (i.e. Lazarillo de Tormes), moral treatises from 18th century France, Rousseau's Émile, and various economic theories about the power of corruption of money (105-106): [2]

---

[1] Alexander von Humboldt noticed early in the 19th century that there was a gap of at least fifty years between the apparition of scientific works in Europe, and their arrival in Latin America (Minguet 108)—one can only imagine the implications of such a delay for the development of the sciences on that continent!

> Podemos pues caracterizar esta obra como una producción literaria mestizada varias veces, por la mezcla y la concordancia de una corriente literaria española del Siglo de Oro, de la ideología francesa y europea racionalista cristiana del siglo XVIII, y de una veta popular mexicana contemporánea. El libro pues es una especie híbrida, en el sentido botánico de la palabra.
>
> (Minguet 107)

The historical, social, racial and cultural discrepancies between Latin America and Europe, as well as the differences in the mentality and outlook on life of their inhabitants further affected the reception of European works, and how they were interpreted and modified to fit a particular situation. Often these texts were changed substantially to adapt them to the notion of decorum and morality held by the creole middle classes for whom these texts were intended. Inaccurate translations were another serious problem, along with the use of fictitious titles, or the omission of the names of the original authors as a way to avoid being charged for publishing rights (Miranda 62).

The present thesis focuses on German elements in Altamirano's work for three main reasons: a) our research revealed the surprising fact that Altamirano's work contained a large number of German references—a rather unexpected discovery considering that the French and Spanish literatures had been the only two major literatures known at the time; b) it was even more surprising to discover that while neither the French, English, nor German references outnumbered each other in Altamirano's critical writings, the German references dominated—if not always in number, most certainly in importance—in his works of narrative fiction; and lastly, c) the impact of the German romantics and of the writers of the Goethe period on Altamirano's narrative has not yet been fully explored by critics.

---

[2] One might argue that Lizardi had no choice but to look to European models for inspiration, since he lived during Mexico's initial stages of political and artistic independence, a time when Mexico had hardly any literary tradition of its own. The works published later, however, reveal that literary "mestizaje" was a common practice throughout the 19th century.

Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of the historical, political and social situation in Mexico from the time of the first signs of unrest which led to Independence, up till the late 1880's when Altamirano's authority began to fade. The chapter also offers an outline of the main literary developments that occured in the 19th century, focusing especially on the period between 1867 and 1889, which corresponds to the time in which Altamirano's career as a writer and teacher was at its prime. The section that follows highlights the most relevant European elements which affected the development of Mexico's literature. Because of their higher incidence, the most significant French and English influences will be mentioned first; the focus will then shift to Germany, and to the availability and reception of works of German origin in Mexico. Emphasis will be not only on the availability and distribution of literary works *per se*, but also on other factors which might have played a role in the dissemination of German culture in Mexico, such as the teaching of German language and literature in schools and universities, as well as the contributions made by German travellers and immigrants. It will be determined to what extent the German influence was direct or via other literatures, and whether the German works were read in the original or in translation.

Chapter 2 looks at Altamirano's life, at his early years as a student at the "Instituto Literario de Toluca", and at his first encounters with German literature at the hands of his teacher Ignacio Ramírez "El Nigromante". It also explores Altamirano's views about Germany in general, and explains the reasons behind Altamirano's unswerving admiration for the German spirit even at times when the generalized atmosphere was one of animosity towards the German nation and its people. Chapter 2 looks essentially at the most relevant opinions which Altamirano expressed in his critical writings regarding a number of subjects connected with Germany and German literature. We will learn about his own interest in becoming proficient in the use of the German language and in having more Mexican people study German, and about his desire to have access to more first-hand translations. Special attention will be paid to Altamirano's views about certain authors of German origin, including Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, Heinrich Zschokke, E.T.A. Hoffmann, and Heinrich Heine.

The third and last chapter contains a detailed analysis of the German references which are present in Altamirano's works of narrative fiction. All German authors which Altamirano quoted in his works belong either to Romanticism or to the Goethe period. We will attempt to explain the meaning of each German reference as it applies to the particular novel or novella in which it appears. Furthermore, the chapter contains preliminary information about the time and place of publication, the basic plot, the main characters, the central themes and motifs, and the narrative structure of each of Altamirano's works. We have also attempted to shed some light on one of the greatest puzzles surrounding Altamirano, namely the origin of his tale "Las tres flores", in order to determine whether it was indeed a translation as he always claimed, or an original work of his own.

Throughout the whole paper we never loose sight of the fact that Altamirano's true mission in life was to promote the creation of Mexico's own literary tradition. Hence, one of the objectives of studying the German references, quotations and allusions that appear in Altamirano's novels and novellas was to show the reader that even though Altamirano made extensive use of foreign material, he did so without ever compromising his vision of literary independence. It will become apparent in the course of this paper that Altamirano applied foreign, and especially German references to highlight certain aspects within his works (i.e., central themes, characters, setting, ambience, etc.), and as a means of surrounding his works with a certain aura of distinction and familiarity.

Anyone acquainted with the work of Altamirano will know that he did not write just for the pleasure of writing; whatever he wrote was motivated by political, moral and pedagogical reasons. Along the same lines, the present study was written under the assumption that a literary work is the product of the socio-historical circumstances that surrounded its author at the time it was written. Marianne O. de Bopp, Karl Hölz and Sara Sefchovich each insist in separate works that it is impossible to study the Mexican literature of the 19th century without taking into account the historical, political and social reality of the time. Politics and intellectual creativity often went hand in hand in Latin America. The constant state of political and social unrest made it impossible for writers to remove themselves and their works from the events that were affecting their lives on a daily basis.[3] It will become more and more apparent in the chapters that follow that it is impossible to isolate Altamirano the novelist, from Altamirano the teacher and committed citizen. To use a method that sees a literary work as operating within a socio-historical vacuum would therefore not have been useful for our purposes.

---

[3] "Gerade die Erlangung der Unabhängigkeit und die damit verbundenen politischen Richtungskämpfe zwischen Konservativen und Liberalen, Republikanern und Monarchisten, Zentralisten und Föderalisten haben ein geistiges Klima der Unruhe entstehen lassen, in welchem sich die Literatur—wenn überhaupt—nur in der Auseinandersetzung mit den konkreten nationalen Anliegen entfalten konnte" (Hölz 49).

Chapter 1

Mexico in the 19th Century: Historical, Social and Economic Background

In 1519, Hernán Cortés and his troops disembarked on a site they named Veracruz. They proceeded towards Tenochtitlán, the capital city of the Aztec empire—built on the site of today's Mexico City—, conquering it in 1521. The downfall of the empire of the Aztec, one of the most advanced and powerful indigenous nations on the American continent, marked the beginning of three hundred years of Spanish domination. For Spain, Mexico's biggest attraction lay in its mineral deposits, rich in precious metals, and in its cheap and submissive native labor force. Spain's aim was to exploit these riches and have the spoils sent back to the mother country.

Mexico was colonized at first mostly by men—soldiers, adventurers, merchants. During the conquest and early colonization whole towns, and especially their women, fell prey to the ravages of war. Often, women were given to the conquerors by the defeated tribes as peace offerings. Later, many settlers had indigenous wives or mistresses. As a result, a gradual amalgamation (or *mestizaje*) took place between the different races. Although the indigenous population, and later the *mestizos*, always outnumbered the white population, there were no significant uprisings from the masses from the times of the conquest until the early 19th century. Even then, the popular classes played a minor role in the emergence of the desire for independence from Spain, or in the planning and final implementation of the movement's goals.

The indigenous people lived for the most part in thousands of tiny villages, in almost complete social and economic isolation from the rest of the country. Meyer and

Sherman point out that with the exception of the occasional parish priest, whites or *mestizos* were rarely seen in these villages (357). Only the larger towns had churches, practically none had schools. And the Spanish language was unknown except to a select few. The danger of the lower classes coalescing was minimal, made almost impossible by the precarious means of communication and their little knowledge of what was happening in other communities across the country. Living far away from the cities where all the major political decisions were made by the conquerors and later on by the rulers that were being sent from Spain, the indigenous population was left alone by the dominant classes to live an existence of misery, hardship and ignorance.

Spain had a tight control over its colonies. There were strict regulations about who could settle in colonies such as Mexico, and what type of profession or trade they were allowed to practise. Nationals other than Spain's own were rarely admitted and could face deportation, incarceration, or even the death penalty in some cases. The same kind of control existed regarding the merchandise, news, or printed material that was allowed to enter the country. The type of literature that could be distributed was carefully screened by the Spanish authorities. Nonetheless, inflammatory literature from Europe would sometimes elude these measures and get to the hands of the literate classes. "The barbarity of the Conquest" and "three centuries of slavery" began to be satirized in popular verse and song (Meyer and Sherman 276). Still, Spain's powerful grip over its colonies remained mostly unchanged until the beginning of the 19th century.

Spain's stranglehold began to deteriorate with the invasion of its territory by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1808. This obviously affected negatively the relationship of Spain with its colonies in the New World, and the image of invincibility that Spain had succeeded in maintaining for so long. Colonists in Mexico and other Latin American countries became aware that Spain's power was not infallible after all. In addition, the French Revolution and the North American struggle for Independence at the end of the

18th century had spread the word of Independence to the New World. With the weakening of Spain's position as a world power, the idea of an independent Mexico became more and more feasible. Especially the *criollo* middle class (those born in the colony to Spanish immigrants) were receptive to the idea of becoming a self-governing nation.

The criollos had always belonged to Mexico's well-to-do middle class, a class consisting mostly of land-owners, doctors, lawyers, politicians and intellectuals, but they had been forced from the beginning to occupy a secondary position from those born in Spain. Influenced by the Romantic ideal of Nationalism, and by their environment, the criollos began to be less and less willing to accept the stigma of congenital inferiority which the Spaniards had placed on them. Finding inspiration in the European and North American ideals about a nation's right for self-determination and an individual's right for freedom, the image of an independent Mexico became more attractive than ever. Many members of the middle class began to meet secretly, often masking their true intentions by meeting at "literary clubs", or similar social or cultural organizations.

Miguel Hidalgo, an aging dissident priest, was the founder of one such "club". Pretending to be discussing the latest literary masterpieces imported from Europe, Hidalgo and his followers were in reality plotting the separation of Mexico from Spain (Meyer and Sherman 283). Father Hidalgo called his followers to arms on September 16, 1810 (which is celebrated today as Mexico's Independence Day) after it became known that the important cities of southern Spain had fallen to the French troops. After Hidalgo was captured and executed in 1811, the rebel leadership was assumed by another parish priest, José María Morelos. The stratification of the Mexican society, and the lack of cohesion and proper organization among the various groups made the fight for Independence a long and arduous one. Independence was finally achieved under the leadership of Agustín de Iturbide eleven years after the first uprisings on September 27, 1821.

Although many poorly armed Indians and mestizos had joined Hidalgo's cause, they were not quite sure what they were fighting for, nor did their fate really matter to those who were in charge of the movement. The impetus for Mexico's movement of Independence had risen not from the masses, as it had been arguably the case of the Revolution in France, but from the criollo middle class.[4] The criollos wanted to be independent from Spain basically to secure their social position and to safeguard their possessions. They wanted to have the same rights and privileges that only the Spaniards had enjoyed so far. The monetary interests of the criollo middle-class and their thirst for power left no room unfortunately for Hidalgo's and Morelos's initial dream of a political reform that included all segments of Mexican society. Instead, "[...] the reformist impulse [...] now became a middle-class dispute, and the Indian was retired to his customary social position from which he could move only by exercising tremendous personal initiative" (Brushwood, Mexico in Its Novel 64).

The progressive European liberal ideals that had inspired the first leaders of the Independence movement in Mexico were not suitable for the social and economic reality of the New World (Sefchovich 16). They had to be molded to a country without institutions or industry, a country with a few immensely rich and powerful landowners and masses of exploited Indians:

> Por eso aunque la revolución de Independencia fue una lucha contra el dominio colonial y feudal, que tuvo que abolir las leyes, costumbres y prácticas económicas que impedían la formación de un Estado moderno, también tuvo que seguir el proceso de concentración de tierras y de explotación del indígena. (16)

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[4] This factor had important implications not only for the development of Mexican politics, but also for the development of culture and the forms of expression it would adopt throughout the 19th century.

With Independence achieved, little changed in the social class structure and the distribution of wealth. Social equality for the popular classes was a concept which the criollos did not acknowledge. Their attitude towards the lower classes remained in essence the same attitude the Spaniards' had had towards them. It was generally believed that the docility of the lower classes had no bounds, and that they would endure their privations forever. Many of the writers and intellectuals shared the same opinion. The hardships of the lower classes were hardly known to the middle-class writers, or else not considered relevant enough to be portrayed in a literary work other than for background purposes.[5] The main characters, on the other hand, were in general depicted as cultured and sophisticated individuals who had, to a great extent, adopted the values and life-style that were being imported from overseas.

The war left a legacy of political violence, economic devastation, and social injustice. Political chaos was the result of conflicting interests amongst the leading criollo factions, mostly between liberals and conservatives.[6] These conflicts had existed for a long time, but had been set aside temporarily to form the alliances needed to launch and carry through the movement for Independence. As soon as Independence was achieved, however, the conflicts surfaced again, but this time amongst a class who had just risen to an unaccustomed position of power, and who had to confront now the major task of organizing a newly born nation. Internal struggles ensued between the liberal and conservative factions and led to continuous uprisings. After the presidential system was established in 1824, liberal and conservative presidents took turns in displacing each other by armed force. Between 1833 and 1855, the presidency changed hands 36 times (Meyer and Sherman 297). Nobody from the two main factions was willing to admit that some compromise was essential for the government to work.

---

[5] There were of course some exceptions, but it was not until the advent of Realism at the end of the 19th century, and specially after the agrarian Revolution of 1910 that the proletariat acquired a central position in the perception of the writers.

[6] The conservatives continued to profit from the institutions and social relations that had already existed prior to Independence—ownership of large estates, theocracy, religious intolerance, bureaucracy, centralized authority, servitude of the rural population. After the achievement of Independence, the professional military class that had been called into life during the armed struggles joined the conservative league as well. The liberals, on the other hand, were essentially mestizos who held respectable positions as priests, state officers, politicians, small proprietors, and who looked to Europe for more advanced models of government (Sefchovich 17).

The struggles between liberals and conservatives (or republicans and monarchists, federalists and centralists, anticlericals and clericals as they would be called at different times) continued for the whole century, and were a major influence in every single area of Mexico's reality, including its intellectual and literary life. During the past century, many Mexican writers and intellectuals became actively involved in the political and historical shaping of their country, and they would use their writings to convey their political convictions. Historical and philosophical texts, literary criticism, even poetry and fiction, all displayed the authors' political orientation. Characters, themes and motifs, language and stylistic elements were carefully chosen to reflect the doctrine of the political party to which a particular writer subscribed: "Los conservadores (o "mochos") creían ser los depositarios de la corrección gramatical; mientras que el campo de la inspiración o de la creación literaria era evidentemente liberal" (Martínez, La expresión nacional 16).

In 1836, and between the years of 1846 to 1848, Mexico lost approximately half of its territory to the United States during a series of armed conflicts. This left a legacy of hostility between the two nations. These events also contributed, particularly among the middle-classes, towards the strengthening of the Mexican nationalistic spirit that had already been in the air since early Independence (Meyer and Sherman 352). The literature of the time responded to this feeling by incorporating an increasing number of Mexican elements. The preoccupation with finding an autonomous form of expression, a real national culture, became more and more important.[7] Literature began to be

---

[7] Stefano Varese warns against understanding the concept of a "national" culture in a sense that involves the whole nation, with all the segments that make up its society:

> Al hablar de cultura nacional se está usando un eufemismo peligroso: La cultura nacional es la cultura del sector dominante de la sociedad. Cultura nacional es la manifestación ideológica

considered as instrumental in the fight for the cause of the fatherland. José Luis Martínez mentions that this search for a "national expression" continued throughout the 19th century, particularly after 1867 under the guidance of Ignacio Manuel Altamirano. Writers, philosophers, historians, critics, lawyers, public officers, and politicians alike became involved in this common goal:

> Fue un periodo de motivación histórica ya que, durante este primer siglo de vida independiente, la lucha por conquistar la expresión propia y autónoma era el objetivo de escritores que entendían la literatura como una función al servicio de la patria.
>
> (La expresión nacional 7)

As José Luis Martínez explains, the continual changes of power from the hands of the conservatives to those of the liberals and back again also caused frequent radical changes in the direction of literature and art (14). The literature of the 19th century was thus tinged with the ideological and political disputes between liberals and conservatives trying to decide which route to follow. At times, conservative traits would be encouraged, at others, liberal elements would gain the upper hand. In the final analysis, these constant shifts in direction slowed down the development of a unified Mexican national literature. The perpetual clashes between liberals and conservatives often caused a split view on how literature was supposed to fulfill its nationalistic call. It was not until the late 1860's and under the guidance of Ignacio Manuel Altamirano—to whose life and work we have dedicated Chapter 2—that these opposing factions were successfully brought together under the same common denominator. Altamirano was the first to propose a clear and detailed agenda on the development of a national culture.

The Reform Laws and the Constitution of 1857 made the division between liberals and conservatives worse than ever before. A new civil war erupted between

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de la burguesía que se apropió del poder económico y político dentro de la nación. (147)

1858-1861. Even though the liberals came out victorious, the war caused serious internal disagreements among the members of the party. The moderate stance taken towards the enemy by the liberal president Benito Juárez had caused an outcry of rage against him among many of the more radical members of Congress. Prominent writers and politicians Francisco Zarco, Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, Ignacio Ramírez, all expressed their dissatisfaction with the President's decisions.

In response to a two year moratorium which Juárez declared to his English, French, and Spanish creditors in 1861, the three nations agreed upon a joint occupation of Mexican waters just off the coast of Veracruz to collect their claims. England and Spain soon withdrew, especially after they became aware of the underlying motives of France's Napoleon III. As nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoleon III dreamt of regaining the imperial status of his uncle by establishing a new French empire in America. He received ample support from Mexico's conservatives who felt so threatened by Juarez's reign that they would rather see another foreign nation in power. Chosen by Napoleon III to occupy the throne of Mexico, the Archduke Maximilian of Austria and his wife Carlota arrived in the country in 1864. Two years later, threatened by external pressures and the weakening of his influence, Napoleon had to withdraw his troops from Mexico. In 1867, the liberals regained power. Maximilian was captured and executed by firing squad.

Economic growth and political stability had been seriously affected by the events of the years from 1861 to 1867. Not having seen a period of lasting peace since early Independence, the liberals set out to establish a new era of peace and economic progress. They decided that it was time that the differences between contrary factions should not be settled by force. While all antagonism did not dissipate during the nine year period of the so-called Restoration (1867-76), this era of relative peace allowed the country and its intellectuals to concentrate on creative activities without major interruptions for the very first time since the beginning of the wars of Independence.

Under the leadership of men like Altamirano, Mexico experienced a boom in its literary production. Newspapers, journals, publishing houses, literary associations, sprang into life in unprecedented numbers.[8] In the beginning, Mexico's literary associations served to alleviate the lack of institutions of higher education during the early days of Independence, but they also provided a sense of brotherhood and protection for the emerging writers amidst times of political unrest. In addition, literary salons served as a fashion statement for those trying to emulate the life-style of the great European Romantics.

The next several years showed that the program of the Reformists was too advanced for the country and the mentality of its people. The liberal party split in three. Juárez died in 1872. Porfirio Díaz, one of Juárez's two main opponents during the presidential election of 1871, assumed the presidency in 1876. Inspired by the ideals of Auguste Comte and Positivism, Díaz's regime seemed one of relative stability, economic growth, and increased foreign investment, but it eventually turned into a dictatorship, where only a few profited. The Church regained its former power and material possessions, and the bourgeoisie came to unprecedented wealth. The poor continued to be exploited in the same manner as before. Díaz's thirty year long dictatorship was brought to an end by a violent armed Revolution which started in 1910, and which raged across the country for over 10 years. In contrast to the movement of Independence a century earlier, the Revolution was essentially a fight of the masses for land and better rights.

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[8] There were 18 literary associations between 1810-35; 32 between 1836-66; 124 between 1867-89; 28 between 1890-1900. The number of existing associations during the years of political stability between 1867 and 1889 is remarkable. This period coincides also with Ignacio Manuel Altamirano's most productive years (Martínez, La expresión nacional 49).

"Mexicanism"

Mexican elements had started to permeate art and literature even before Independence. Not willing to accept the stigma of congenital inferiority which the Spaniards had placed on them, the native-born criollos began to celebrate their *mexicanidad* —naturally, the Spaniards showed disdain at what they saw essentially as the corruption of Spanish culture. "Mexicanism" is a question of subject matter and tone. Writers and artists in general started to include characters, places, and situations in their works which were undeniably Mexican. In addition to these obvious elements, they also felt the need to capture a far more elusive factor: a certain attitude, a spirit which they felt could only be found among the Mexican people. According to Brushwood, Mexicanism is an element which defies description, and which is hard to grasp because it is the product of many external and internal forces: "[...] it may be identified as that quality which made the *Periquillo Sarniento* typically Mexican in spite of its inspiration in the Spanish picaresque novel and which is found in an entirely different expression in Luis Inclán's *Astucia* (1865)" (The Romantic Novel in Mexico 28-29).

Three hundred years of Spanish domination had left their mark on the Mexican people's sense of identity and self-worth. Mexico's indigenous past— and present— often lurked in the background as a mild embarrassment, even amongst Mexico's most enlightened scholars, only because the European colonists, insensitive to historical realities, had always considered the European models as the better ones. Meyer and Sherman point specifically to the conquerors' ethnocentrism and excessive Christian zeal which reduced all things Indian to a level of shame (3). A sense of worthlessness sprang from the erroneous perception that whatever was purely Mexican was somewhat vulgar and could thus not stand up to the European models. In a study published in

1906, the acclaimed writer and historian José López Portillo y Rojas observed the following:

> [...] el rastro que había dejado en nuestro espíritu la condición secundaria de nuestra existencia durante el periodo colonial; nuestros abuelos, nacidos, educados y muertos bajo la dominación extranjera habían nutrido su espíritu con el sentimiento de nuestra inferioridad colectiva. [...] todo tenía que ser mejor viniendo del otro lado del Atlántico: todo cuanto nos pertenecía, comenzando con nosotros mismos, debía ceder el paso a lo que no era nuestro, como de calidad inferior que era.
>
> (qtd. in Carballo 60)

After Independence, this feeling of inferiority often clashed with the emerging need of a dominantly mestizo population to acknowledge and to be proud of Mexico's Indian heritage and mestizaje. In art and literature this conflict slowly manifested itself in the attempt to include the spirit of Mexico and of its people, and at the same time by the need to ignore them in favor of well-known and universally accepted European paradigms, especially since Mexico did not have an established literary tradition of its own to build on. This is what made it so appealing for Mexican writers and novelists to look to foreign models for inspiration despite the strong need for the creation of a truly Mexican form of expression. This (sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious) practice persisted well into the 20th century. Nineteenth century Mexican literature can therefore be best defined as a constant push and pull between both tendencies, a peculiar attitude of both rejection and appropriation of Europe's cultural tradition often reflected in the use of both European models and Mexican elements within the same work.

19th Century Mexican Literature

The following section is intended to provide a panorama of the main literary developments right after Independence till the late 1880's, as an indication of the cultural and literary environment in which Altamirano actively participated as a novelist, poet, essayist, critic, and teacher. The main literary movement in Mexico, as in all of Latin America, in the period following Independence was romanticism. Its arrival in the New World came almost fifty years after its first appearance in Europe, and whereas the movement had lost most of its vitality in Europe by the 1850's, it remained in force in Latin America almost till the end of the century. In Mexico, the romantic period started around 1830 and, according to Raimundo Lazo, went through two distinct phases: the first one, superficial, of a high-flown voice, with the desire to overthrow all the traditional sources of inspiration; the second one, more sober, more careful in its form and style, a conscious moving away from the excess of the earlier days, and with a marked nationalistic orientation (Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana. Siglo XIX 56).

Concerned with freedom and individualism, the early Mexican romantics set out to explore the meaning of their newly won Independence and to foster a distinctive culture.[9] Although they relied heavily on foreign models, they began to write with great emotion and sentimentality about their aboriginal heritage, their physical environment, their customs and traditions, and the wars of Conquest and Independence. They began therefore to adapt foreign models to suit their own particular concerns. The Mexican romantics were particularly drawn to Rousseauist liberalism on the one hand, and to the lyrical and subjective quality of romanticism on the other. The first romantic works, especially in the case of poetry, were pervaded by

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[9] Romanticism was explored almost exclusively by the liberals, whereas classicism remained the literary tenet of the conservatives. Unlike in most other countries, the Mexican romantics and classicists coexisted peacefully for the most part. Writers of both sides were able to associate and work together, especially under the guidance and encouragement of Ignacio M. Altamirano following the foundation of his journal El renacimiento in 1867. Nonetheless, the lines between the two schools were clearly drawn and were rarely crossed by the adherents of each doctrine.

> [...] a profound and lyric melancholy emanating from the Amerind racial spirit, manifesting itself in the idea of death as a poetic preoccupation, in the rapture and despair of love, and in a sense of frustration in ideals; an exalted chivalry that admits of no middle ground between nobility of the soul and depravity.
>
> (J. Lloyd Read 50)

For most of its Colonial period, Mexico's literary production had been limited to poetry and drama, while prose writing had remained a rather undercultivated genre. With the advent of Independence, however, an increasing number of writers became dissatisfied with the old genres. The writers of liberal conviction especially, felt the need for a literary form that would allow them to capture the historical, political, social, economic and cultural innovations they were witnessing every day. Prose writing soon became the favorite form of expression after these authors discovered that it facilitated the task of describing a rapidly changing environment. Leo Pollmann explains that this transition occured not so much because Spanish American writers had been exposed to only a limited number of European novels prior to Independence, but rather, because a country cannot really establish a narrative tradition of its own unless it has developed a strong sense of national identity:

> Ein erster Hinweis darauf, wie eng lateinamerikanischer Roman und Selbstentdeckung Lateinamerikas miteinander verbunden sind, liegt schon darin, daß Lateinamerika erst seit der Zeit unmittelbar nach Einsetzen der Unabhängigkeitsbewegung eigene Romane hat. Man hat diese "Verspätung" gegenüber den meisten europäischen Ländern lange damit erklärt, daß ein Einfuhrverbot für Romane bestand. [...] Eine geduldige Überprüfung des historischen Materials ergab allerdings, daß nach 1580 alle Arten fiktionaler Literatur, [...], importiert wurden, wenn auch in geringer Zahl. Die

> "Verspätung" des lateinamerikanischen Romans dürfte jedenfalls mehr damit zu tun haben, daß den Conquistadoren und Kolonisatoren das Bewußtsein einer kulturellen Eigenständigkeit Amerikas abging. Die Kreolen ihrerseits empfanden sich, soweit sie kulturelle Ambitionen entwickelten, zumeist als Werkzeuge einer kulturellen und spirituellen Eroberung und Missionierung, [...] ; die Mestizen und indigenen Bevölkerungsteile fanden im Rahmen dieser Bedingungen auch keine Gelegenheit, eine Art nationales Bewußtsein zu entwickeln, wie es für die extensive [...] Schaffung eines Romans erforderlich ist. (11)

The precarious political and social situation of the country hardly gave most writers enough leisure to commit themselves fully to the production of narrative texts which were longer than the odd newspaper article.[10] This, combined with the fact that most Mexican writers at the time adhered rather strongly to either one or the other ruling party, was the reason that journalism became the most popular form of prose writing. This in turn prompted the appearance of large numbers of newspapers and magazines. Because they dealt with a variety of subject matter and were cheaper to produce than books, newspapers and magazines had the advantage over books of attracting larger numbers of readers. The first novels and short fiction written in Mexico were published in installments in newspapers and magazines before they ever appeared in book form. For most of the 19th century, periodicals remained Mexico's most important means of publication of narrative fiction. These periodicals were often short-lived, ended by the whim of an editor, or else victims of political uncertainty and economic hardship (literary associations and institutions of higher education were too often subject to the same fate).

Critics like José Emilio Pacheco maintain that the introduction of prose writing—in particular journalistic prose and the writing of historic texts—remains one of Mexico's greatest cultural achievements of the 19th century:

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[10] Many of Mexico's writers were lawyers, doctors, teachers, or politicians, and had to tend to these occupations first.

> A nadie que se acerque a lo escrito en México en el siglo XIX antes del modernismo, se le escapa el hecho de que nuestra mejor literatura de entonces está en lo que no es literatura: no hay comparación entre los poemas, narraciones y dramas por una parte y por otra la historiografía y el periodismo. Los primeros representan la infancia de un arte, los pasos iniciales de una búsqueda de expresión. En cambio, la prosa [periodística] no admite condescendencias y está a la altura de lo mejor que se ha hecho después entre nosotros.
>
> (qtd. in Sefchovich 25)

Pacheco explains that while journalism and historiography were fairly advanced, the composition of narrative prose was still in its infancy. Up to the middle of the century, the production of novels was rather low—probably more than 80% of the Spanish American novels written in the 19th century appeared during the second half of the century (Brushwood, Genteel Barbarism 3). A lack of stylistic ability and of experience in writing condemned many of the early attempts to be not much more than cheap imitations of European works. But even later works had a hard time to come up with a structurally and stylistically authentic form of expression.

According to modern standards, many of these narrative works are either too short to be classified as novels, or too long to be short stories. They often have an incoherent structure or too many plot lines running parallel without any connecting links between them. Many authors had a hard time creating rounded characters; more often than not, novels are filled with flat characters (or types). Brushwood explains that specially the novels written before 1867 are poor in structure and literary style. With the exception of Pizarro, Brushwood claims that most writers lacked the ability to develop their ideas through plot and character (The Romantic Novel in Mexico 34). Probably in imitation of Samuel Richardson's didactic novels and other 18th century edifying texts, many authors also used their works to address issues of social etiquette and adequate moral behaviour (they thought they had to give a proper example to their young—

mostly female—middle class readers). This had the effect of adding essay-type digressions to an often already incoherent text.

Many writers were, nonetheless, aware of the need to find a form of expression that would set them apart from the European tradition. This wish prompted many of them to include in their works elements from Mexico's recent historical past. The Mexican romantics thus consciously broke away from the popular European romantic tendency to portray characters and events far removed in time and place. The inclusion of a more realistic [11] setting led to the creation of Mexico's own variant of romanticism, the so-called "social romanticism" (or "romantic realism" as it was named by the acclaimed Latin American critic Fernando Alegría). One of its most important elements was the writers' belief that they are able to influence the destiny of their country through their works:

> Die Sozialromantik ist somit für den [...] spanischamerikanischen Roman eine Zeit der Gärung und der erwartungsvollen Hinwendung zu neuen Möglichkeiten. Hinter all diesen Romanen spürt man die zumeist mit liberalen politischen Anschauungen gepaarte Überzeugung, für sein Land etwas tun zu können. Man verspricht sich dabei viel vom Vorbild Europas, [...]
>
> (Pollmann 84)

Most of the works written in the 19th century display a curious combination of typical romantic traits (exaggerated emotions, unlike coincidences, categorical division of good and evil, sentimentalism and melodrama), and a type of social criticism which reveals the authors' concern for their immediate surroundings. According to Pollmann, this mixture of real and fictitious elements was the result of the writers' attempt to adhere to the European models while at the same time incorporating the events which they were experiencing at that particular moment ("Auf dem Gebiet des Romans bleibt es bei Versuchen, im Rahmen einer Nachfolge europäischer Modelle ein Stück eigener Wirklichkeit mit einzubringen" 84). Even works published during the last third of the 19th century—including those by Altamirano—, combine a high degree of sentimentality with social criticism.

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[11] The term "realistic" works well as long as it is not taken to mean Flaubertian realism, but is understood more appropriately as mimesis (Brushwood, Genteel Barbarism 4).

The problem was that the authors believed that they were painting a true picture of society and revealing its deficiencies, when in reality they were portraying society from the perspective of the criollo middle-class to which most of them belonged. Leo Pollmann claims that this tendency is already manifest in the works of Fernández de Lizardi, the earliest exponent of social romanticism: "Fernández de Lizardi kritisiert wohl das koloniale System, aber seine Kritik erfolgt im Interesse einer bürgerlich-kreolischen Mittellage [...]" (20). Most of the intellectual and artistic elite of Mexico resided in the capital city, cut off from the events of the rest of the country. Many of them were simply unaware of the terrible living conditions and the lack of education of the enormous indigenous population. The mundane daily life of the popular (mostly indigenous) classes and their true social and economic plight was therefore largely ignored in Mexican fiction until the 1920's. Instead, the characters depicted in many of the novels written in the 19th century belonged to an urban middle class whose outlook on life was greatly influenced by European fashion and tradition. They were unaware for the most part of the misery and hardship surrounding the life of the lower classes. Even the authors who had a more accurate vision of their environment were stricken with a certain ambivalence: they did not really want to endanger the relative stability of their own privileged life-styles by promoting social change.

Another factor that inhibited the objective interpretation and representation of reality was that most authors were not able to separate their literary productions from their political convictions. In addition, many of the events depicted in these works were too recent to allow the type of objectivity that develops as the events become more and more distant in time. In the end, many authors simply focused on entertaining their readers and stirring their emotions, without investing too much energy in attempting to rise in them a spirit of social consciousness:

> [...] Romantic novels [were filled] with concern for a kind of moral behaviour that is rarely related to any profound consideration of the social circumstance, but plays on the sympathy of the reader by tearful description of the tragedy of one person who has been victimized by another. These tragedies may be described as the social norm in the novels of Romanticism.
>
> (Brushwood, Mexico in Its Novel 76)

Social romanticism (or romanticism as such) remained in place for almost the entire 19th century. In order to simplify the study of a literary movement of such dimensions, José Luis Martínez proposed the division of Mexico's 19th century narrative production into four distinct phases: a) 1810-1836, b) 1836-67, c) 1867-89, d) 1889 and after. Martínez believes that each of these periods represents a different stage in Mexico's cultural and literary development, because each was influenced by a somewhat different ideological stance caused by particular social and historical circumstances. Nonetheless, all these periods are linked together by the common need to absorb the cultural influences from Europe and, at the same time, by the need to create a culture that reflects Mexico's own heritage (La expresión nacional 13).

The first three periods, and in particular the ones that reach from the mid 1850's to the mid 1880's are relevant to the study of Altamirano's work, and are essential for the understanding of the role that foreign literatures played in his work during that time, as well as in Mexico's literature in general. Although the last few years of Altamirano's life coincide with the emergence of modernism, his prose writing remained mostly unaffected by this movement (with the possible exception of his last novel Atenea). For this reason, the following section will only cover the first three generations defined by

Martínez. Furthermore, the scope of the present work allows only a brief description of the main characteristics of each period, as well as a short reference to a small number of its most significant authors and works.

a) 1810 - 1836:

This period marks the beginning of Mexico's patriotic literature, and includes the first attempts of mestizo writers to express their own voice. The long struggle for Independence and the early attempts to build an autonomous nation had taken its toll on Mexico's people and writers alike. There was not much time or opportunity for any large scale literary experimentation. Only a few authors, aside from Lizardi, ventured beyond the traditional literary genres inherited from the times of the Spanish colony. Between Lizardi's death and the middle of the century, only very few novels were written. Still, the few examples available clearly exhibit the authors' desire to incorporate ever more Mexican elements into their works, even though they did not always know how to make the best use of them.

José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi (1776-1827)—known as "el pensador mexicano" for the periodical he published under the same name between 1812 and 1814—was the first Mexican writer to consciously include Mexican aspects in his narrative works, and to openly denounce the unequal treatment of Mexico's native population by the Spanish colonists. Active at first as a journalist and political pamphleteer, Lizardi's writings rapidly became subject to censorship. In Mexico's changing political environment, freedom of press and freedom of expression were only short-lived. In order to escape censorship, Lizardi turned his attention to fiction. Through the use of fictitious characters and events, Lizardi found the perfect vehicle to communicate his political convictions to the reader without having to fear persecution. This strategy, unheard-of by Mexican writers, was not new, but had been widely used by the authors of the French Enlightenment:

> Der Politiker Fernández de Lizardi sah sich [...] gezwungen, nach dem Vorbild der französischen Aufklärer die indirekte, verhüllte Wirksamkeit zu suchen und Romane zu schreiben, in denen er seine politischen Anliegen, die freilich für unsere Begriffe nur mit Maßen revolutionär waren, kaschiert.
>
> (Pollmann 20)

El Periquillo Samiento (1816), Lizardi's first novel—and also considered by many as the first truly Latin American (and Mexican) novel—, combines elements from both Mexican and foreign traditions in a rather interesting way. Ideologically and thematically, the work is eminently Mexican and nationalistic. Settings, characters and language are unmistakably Mexican. They are masterfully combined to create an effective satire of Mexico's urban middle class. Structurally, however, the work is heavily indebted to foreign models:

> Das Werk verbindet Strukturen europäischer Modelle, des spanischen Schelmenromans, klassizistischer Pädagogik, barocker Moralistik und aufklärerischer Kritik nach Art von MONTESQUIEUs *Lettres persanes*, daneben auch ROUSSEAUsches Gedankengut in popularisierter Form zu einer trotz allem homogen wirkenden lateinamerikanischen Synthese.
>
> (Pollmann 19)

José María Lafragua's Netzula (1832), on the other hand, is a perfect example of the inability of many of the early writers to use the native elements for more than just adding a touch of Americanism (or romantic "couleur locale") to works which are otherwise simple imitations of European works. Netzula is the tragic love story of a young Indian couple set before the Spanish Conquest. Based on Rousseau's myth of the noble salvage, and inspired probably by works such as Chateaubriand's Atala[12], Lafragua composed a highly idealized sentimental love story that was more successful in breaking the hearts of the readers than in providing any sort of true historical background (Brushwood, Mexico in Its Novel 71). A more accurate story from a social point of view can be found in J.R. Pacheco's El criollo (1836). Pacheco blames the discriminatory nature of colonial society for the tragic outcome of the love story between the protagonists. His insight into the functioning of society was, however, more of an exception than a rule among the writers of the epoch.

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[12] Atala o los amores de dos salvajes en el desierto was translated by the Mexican Fray Servando Teresa de Mier (1763-1827) in 1801, only one year after its original appearance in France.

The precarious political and social conditions to which writers and intellectuals were subject did at least have one positive effect on the literary developments of the time. It forced writers to form close alliances, and to look for refuge among like-minded individuals. As a result, a number of literary associations emerged, allowing their members to exchange ideas, to discuss foreign works, and to listen to each other's most recent compositions. The most important of these associations was the "Academia de San Juan de Letrán", founded in 1836. Until its disappearance in 1856, the Academy of Letrán remained Mexico's centre of literary activity, and the prime meeting place for the young novelists, poets and dramatists. Several institutions of higher education were also founded during this time. After the system of higher education was reformed in 1833, five new schools opened their doors almost simultaneously: Escuela de Estudios Preparatorios, Escuela de Estudios Ideológicos y Humanidades, Escuela de Ciencias Físicas y Matemáticas, Escuela de Ciencias Médicas, Escuela de Jurisprudencia, all of which were located in Mexico City. Most of these institutions played an active role in the dissemination of European literature and philosophy, and in the teaching of foreign languages.

b) 1836 - 1867:

The brief period of calm which Mexico experienced immediately after the war with the United States in 1836 gave a boost to the country's culture, including its production of fiction. The foundation of several newspapers and magazines played an essential part in the development of Mexico's narrative fiction during these years. El siglo XIX (founded in 1841) and El monitor republicano (founded in 1844) were two of Mexico's most important liberal newspapers, and both published vast amounts of narrative prose (El siglo XIX and El monitor republicano were two of the few publications that remained in circulation with only a few interruptions for most of the century). As in the previous period, literary associations also continued to be popular meeting grounds for the new generations of writers. It was during this time that Mexico's writers and intellectuals became aware as a group of the need to match the country's newly acquired state of independence with a genuinely national culture: "En esa época surgió el deseo de crear una literatura que fuera expresión de lo nacional" (Martínez 37). However, many authors continued to include Romantic themes and motifs in their works which, on closer scrutiny, did not apply at all to Mexican society (Brushwood, The Romantic Novel in Mexico 22).

Four of the most prominent writers of this generation were Justo Sierra (father), Manuel Payno, Juan Díaz Covarrubias, and Luis G. Inclán. All four display in their works a profound concern for their country. Although their comments on society are limited mostly to the middle classes, their descriptions of places and people are authentic. The value of most of these novels does not lie in their form or style: many of them are collections of *costumbrista* sketches rather than novels. Serialized publication, combined with a lack of proper writing experience, caused many novels to appear fractioned and incoherent once they were published in book form, so that their value depended mostly on the quality of their descriptions. The descriptions found in Justo Sierra's La hija del judío (1848-1850), are actually on a level with those of Sir Walter Scott (Brushwood 75). La hija del judío, is the most complex and best constructed work of fiction that appeared in Mexico during the 1840's.

Manuel Payno stands out for his lengthy participation in the literary life of the country. Although he only wrote four major works (one of which he never finished), these works appeared within a time span of almost half a century, mirroring thus the major changes that occurred in Mexico's cultural environment. His first serialized novel, El fistol del diablo, appeared between 1845 and 1846, his last novel, Los bandidos de Río Frío, was published between 1889 and 1891. Payno's novels are like most of the other novels written at the time: they stand out for their detailed descriptions of the social milieu, but not for any innovations in narrative technique. Brushwood refers to El fistol del diablo as a "very long, rambling novel" with loosely connected episodes (The Romantic Novel in Mexico 77). Payno attempted to use a scarfpin as a connecting device for the different episodes, but he forgot all about it halfway through the novel. The plot, at least, takes some of the characters across a good part of Mexico, providing Payno with the opportunity to describe and criticize a large variety of Mexican customs. Los bandidos de Río Frío, Payno's last work, is basically another typical novel of customs, only that Payno's technique of handling minute detail had definitely improved over his earlier works. Brushwood believes that this development came as a result of Altamirano's encouragement to his fellow writers to study the techniques used by foreign novelists (Brushwood 77).

The amount of literature produced in these years (as for the most part of the 19th century) depended greatly on the political circumstances. During the North American invasion of 1846-48, the Revolution of Ayutla in 1855, and the War of Reform of 1858-61, there was a sharp decline in the production of literary works. Juan Díaz Covarrubias, for example, was the only novelist to publish between the years 1855 and 1861, a time when the War of Reform brought Mexico's literary life to a virtual standstill. Despite his short life (1837-59) and the unsettled times in which he lived, Covarrubias became one of Mexico's main exponents of both the historical novel and the novel of customs. His main works are the historical novel Gil Gómez, el insurgente (1858), set during the War of Independence, and the novels of customs La clase media (1858) and El diablo en México (published posthumously in 1860). The liberal victory of 1861, on the other hand, gave an immediate boost to the novel. A large number of works were written and published in 1861. The sudden boom, however, lasted only until the start of the French intervention in 1862.

There were also hardly any noteworthy publications during the time of the empire (1864-67). The liberal cause, and along with it its main writers, suffered a major setback during the reign of Maximilian, imposing a severe restraint on the production of literary works. One of the few exceptions was the publication in 1865 of Astucia el jefe de los hermanos de la hoja, o los charros contrabandistas de la rama—or Astucia, for short—by Luis G. Inclán. Like most of his predecessors, Inclán was poorly prepared for writing fiction. His advantage though was that he was well acquainted with his environment. Astucia is an accurate and ingenuous portrayal of Mexico's rural customs (unlike many of his fellow writers who were only familiar with life in the capital city, Inclán had experienced life in the countryside first-hand). However, both the emotions and the action are highly exaggerated, and the characters are divided categorically into good or bad (Brushwood, Mexico in Its Novel 93). And in spite of the accuracy of its descriptions, Astucia remains essentially a romantic novel.

c) 1867 - 1889:

The execution of Maximilian in 1867, and the restoration of the Republic under Benito Juárez marked the beginning of an era of relative peace and stability. These years became the most fruitful ones for the development of the Mexican novel. For the first time in the century, writers were allowed to associate freely with each other, and were able to produce unhurriedly. The proliferation of the liberal spirit, along with a growing interest in the *costumbrista* and realist tendencies that were being imported from Spain and France, gave rise to a greater degree of "social awareness".[13] Politicians and intellectuals alike joined hands for the establishment of a new, stronger, secular, more developed, and progressive Mexico. The majority of the novels published during the late 1860's were written from a liberal perspective. The conservative faction, on the other hand, had relatively few exponents in fiction (the most notable was José María Roa Bárcenas with his 1870 novel La quinta modelo, which constitutes a fierce, though not very credible denunciation of liberalism).

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[13] "Social awareness" is to be understood as a common effort towards the restoration of Mexico's worth and self-image. The impoverished masses continued to be ignored for the most part, both in real

Although the liberals were in control of almost every aspect of society, they did not shun the conservatives' efforts to help in the construction of Mexico's national literary tradition. Roa Bárcenas, for example, was a well liked and highly esteemed writer despite his conservative ideas. Ignacio Manuel Altamirano played a key role in the establishment of this mutual tolerance between writers belonging to opposing factions. His literary review El renacimiento, founded in 1869, accepted contributions regardless of the generation or political faith of its authors, and its popularity is a good indication of the heightened intellectual and literary activity the country experienced during the late 1860's and early 1870's. Unfortunately, El renacimiento did not survive its first year of existence. Still, it played a crucial role in the establishment of the future direction of Mexico's literature.

The immediate response to the restoration of the Republic was the revival of the historical novel.[14] Many of the most popular works published during this period combine elements from both sentimental and historical novels. A highly idealized fictional love story is usually set against a background of historically accurate events,

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life and in the works of art (Meyer and Sherman 424).

[14] The 19th century historical novel in Mexico was not "historical" in the sense of the European tradition. The Mexican variant does not deal as much with the distant past, as with events that are recent enough to be fresh in everybody's memory. During this time, most of Mexico's authors were involved in one way or another in the political life of the country, and committed to the modernization of their nation. Hence they were much more interested in the portrayal (though often distorted by their own political convictions) of recent incidents. This also served as a good selling feature: since people usually identify with events that are closely related to them, the likelihood of attracting the attention of a higher number of readers was dramatically increased.

places, and personages. The interest in this kind of fiction grew out of the intensified national awareness that came with the triumph of the Reform and the downfall of the Habsburg empire, combined with the long-standing popularity of the romantic tradition and its predilection for sentimental subject matter. In terms of style and narrative technique, the novels and the short fiction written during this period were of a better quality than their forerunners. Juan A. Mateos, José Tomás de Cuéllar, and Ireneo Paz are three of the main exponents of this type of fiction. Their works appeared between 1868 and the early 1870's, the most prolific years in Mexico's literary production after the restoration of the Republic.

In 1868, Juan A. Mateos published El cerro de las campanas, named after the site of Maximilian's execution. Mateos's main purpose in writing this work was to condemn the French intervention, and especially the collaboration of the Mexican conservative party and the Clergy. He categorically classified the conservative forces as evil, and the liberal forces as good; his characterization follows the same route. Juan A. Mateos's liberalism was the equivalent of Roa Bárcenas's conservatism, both he and Roa Bárcenas were radicals in their respective political convictions. It seems that Mateos wrote this novel with the mere intention to express his disliking towards the conservatives and the foreign attackers. Mateos was convinced that the liberal principles were a clear-cut solution for the ills not only of Mexico, but of the world. The novel is woefully melodramatic and carelessly written, but for a long time it remained the most widely read account of the French intervention (Brushwood, Mexico in Its Novel 97).

José Tomás de Cuéllar was one of the numerous writers who came under the direct influence of Altamirano. Cuéllar made valuable contributions to the novel in the areas of characterization and unity of action. In 1871, Cuéllar began the publication of a series of novels with the collective title La linterna mágica. Unlike most of his predecessors and contemporaries, Cuéllar succeeded in giving unity to his series, providing the reader with a well developed and coherent commentary on society. Each of the novels in the series is similar in style and structure. Overall, the strength of Cuéllar's fiction lies in his characterization. Cuéllar's characters belong to the same middle class as most characters in Mexico's 19th century fiction, and are not always fully developed, but they are more directly involved with the action and with their surroundings. According to Brushwood, Cuéllar succeeds in presenting reality through his characters, reality being "a cross section of several lives" (Brushwood, Mexico in Its Novel 106). Cuéllar was also familiar with the fundamental principles of photography, and he tried to apply these in his writings. The photographic quality of Cuéllar's novels makes them into direct forerunners of Mexico's realist novel, but he was still too much under the influence of 19th century narrative to be able to make full use of his photographic intentions.

Ireneo Paz was probably the best historical novelist of his generation. His works are historically accurate, and were not written with the sole purpose of disseminating the author's personal opinions about history and politics. Paz's prose is of better quality than that of most of the other writers of his time, even though he, like so many others before him, had trouble integrating history and fiction. Many of his novels include unrelated factual material like legal documents and statistics (Brushwood, Mexico in Its Novel 98). His best known work is the series Leyendas históricas de la independencia (1886-1894). He also published six separate historical novels between the years of 1871 and 1914. Paz often wrote about events which occured a long time ago. By venturing back in time further than most of his fellow writers, Paz came closer than any of them to writing in the tradition of the European 19th century historical novel. Both Amor y suplicio (1873) and Doña Marina (1883), are set in the early 16th century during the Spanish Conquest. Brushwood points out that the sympathy of the author towards both the conquered and the conqueror is the most interesting characteristic of these two novels, in particular Paz's suggestion that the effects of a "head-on collision" (98) of two utterly different civilizations would be felt for centuries to come (curiously, the collision of cultures is one of the main themes of Latin America's 20th century novel).

Following the prolific years of 1868-71, Mexico suffered a sharp decline in its production of narrative prose. The boom of 1868 and 1869 proved to be only temporary, and had disappeared as fast as it had come. Not too many new faces appeared on the literary scene. The few novels of stature that were published between 1870 and 1885 were from well established writers who had already been active participants in the literary life of the country during the times of the Reform. But even their contributions were fewer than before. Pedro Castera, Rafael de Zayas Enríquez, and Manuel Sánchez Mármol are among the few new novelists that emerged in the early 1880's. Of the three, it is probably Pedro Castera whose work deserves a closer look.[15] Castera published two novels in 1882, Carmen and Los maduros. The first is essentially a romantic work, the second leans more towards realism. Carmen has often been erroneously compared to Jorge Isaac's monumental novel María. Although Carmen is a sentimental novel as well, it lacks the idyllic quality of María, and its *costumbrista* episodes are fewer and of a weaker nature (Brushwood, Mexico in Its Novel 112). Los maduros, on the other hand, is a unique work. It was one of Mexico's first novels to offer a realistic picture of the lives and toils of the laboring classes via the portrayal of the deplorable working and living conditions of a group of silver miners, and the comparison with the conspicuous life style of the wealthy.

During the late 1860's, and throughout the 70's and 80's, Mexico's narrative had begun to exhibit an increasing proportion of realist and naturalist characteristics. Romanticism, however, never disappeared completely (both writers and readers seemed reluctant to modify their romantic vision of the world).[16] Such best-selling romantic traits as melancholy and rebellion were handed down from one generation to the next, and were often preserved by the incoming schools of thought. Modernism, for example, adopted some of romanticism's favorite themes, but abolished its long-winded, old-fashioned forms. Neither realism nor naturalism had a long or distinguished history in Mexico as independent movements. They remained mostly subordinated to romanticism. According to Brushwood, there was no line separating modernism from realism, or from naturalism: "The techniques of Realism-Naturalism are apparent in the stories of the *modernistas*, just as their interest in literary refinement is apparent in the Realist-Naturalist novels" (Mexico in Its Novel 146).

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[15] The name Rafael de Zayas Enríquez will appear again later in the text in connection with his role as translator of German literature.

[16] Unlike most other countries, Mexico's political and ideological makeup kept romanticism alive and

The advent of modernism, however, definitely changed the way in which literature had been viewed until then, as well as the role it played within society: "El modernismo busca una expresión libre, exclusiva del artista, iniciando la ruptura arte-sociedad" (Martínez, La expresión nacional 19). The earlier generations had written with the political, social, and cultural needs of the country in mind, and with the desire to contribute to the country's development, whereas the new generation of *modernistas* was concerned mostly with the artistic quality of their productions. Not only were they driven by the desire to rely less and less on European models, and to search instead for an artistic expression of their own, but they were also discouraged by the regime of Díaz from expressing any sort of social commitment.

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well for most of the 19th century. Although realist inclinations appeared more and more often, the romantic impulse was too persistent to be easily replaced by the new tendencies that were arriving from Europe.

Foreign Literary Influences [17]

Most of the reading material available in Mexico before Independence came from Spain. Other European, non-Spanish works were unknown for their most part. During the prime of Spain's colonial rule, any material which was not in line with Spain's political and religious doctrines was considered potentially blasphemous, and therefore subject to strict control. During the last third of the 18th century things began to change. Under the reign of a more liberal Carlos III, Spain began to open its doors to the rest of Europe. Very soon, European works became available in Spain and in the Spanish colonies. Most of these works were either French, or arrived via France. A great part of Europe's literature was introduced to Spain (and hence to the New World) in the form of French translations and adaptations. The subsequent elaboration of Spanish translations meant that many of these works arrived in Latin America with substantial discrepancies between the original and the final versions.

The tyrannical reign of Fernando VII during the first three decades of the 19th century once again distanced Spain from the rest of Europe. By that time, however, many of Spain's colonies (Mexico included) had reached their independence. This meant that they were now free to import literature from other European nations as well. Research indicates that French literature and French language translations of English literature continued to be the most common influence in 19th century post-Independence Mexico.[18] The popularity of France could be seen not only in the number of French

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[17] It is not possible within the parameters of the present work to provide the reader with a complete picture of all the foreign elements that might have had an impact on Mexican letters. For further information on the subject please consult the bibliography, especially Dr. Marianne O. de Bopp's work Contribución al estudio de las letras alemanas en México.

[18] Despite independence, it was impossible to deny the racial, cultural, ideological and linguistic similarities that existed between Spain and Latin America. Spanish literature therefore continued to play a role in the New World.

After the death of Fernando VII in 1833, many of the writers who had been forced to emigrate to France or England to escape persecution returned to Spain. Their stay abroad had had a visible effect on their writing, and on their perception of literature. The impact of these latest English and French books that were being imported, read and imitated, but also in the clothing, architecture, and taste for food and for music exhibited by the members of the privileged classes of the bigger urban centres like Mexico City. English literature became popular at that time too, but usually remained second in importance compared to that of France. And most of the English works were read in French translation.

French and English romanticism were particularly appealing to Latin America's newly independent countries because they themselves were going through times of social, political and ideological uncertainty similar to those that had inspired romanticism in Europe. Even though romanticism was the strongest influence at work in the construction of Latin America's (and Mexico's) literary tradition, the kind of temporal and spatial *mestizaje* illustrated in the introductory pages became a common practice. Traces of the Spanish picaresque novel, of Cervantes's Don Quijote, of Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels, and of John Milton's Paradise Lost can be found in many works belonging to this period. These older works were perceived to be as attractive and innovative as the more current romantic ones because they had arrived in Latin America (with the exception of the Spanish titles) at roughly the same time.

France became famous in Mexico for its sentimental novel; England for its historical novel. Chateaubriand's Atala and Le Génie du Christianisme, and Bernardin de Saint Pierre's Paul et Virginie were fervently admired and imitated all across Latin America for most of the 19th century. Other favorite French works included the following: Eugène Sue's Mystères de Paris; Alexandre Dumas's (father) Le Vicomte de Bragelonne, Les Trois Mousquetaires and Le Comte de Monte-Cristo; Alphonse de Lamartine's Histoire des Girondíns; along with the works of Victor Hugo and Alfred de Musset. England's best known authors seem to have been Byron, Sir Walter Scott (for

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influences on Spain's literature was felt in the New World as well.

his historical novels), and Samuel Richardson. Fenimore Cooper was the only North American author known at the time.[19]

Presence of Germany in Mexico

English and French, however, were not the only foreign letters which played a role in the development of Mexico's literary tradition. There is enough evidence to prove that the influence of countries like Germany was also quite substantial. It appears that a greater number of Mexicans spoke German and were familiar with German literature and culture than generally assumed, especially during the second half of the 19th century:

> La literatura alemana es conocida desde una época muy anterior de lo que se suponía; llega a México por mediación de Francia y España, pero también directamente. [...] La influencia alemana en la historia espiritual y cultural de México fue mayor, más amplia y más profunda de lo que generalmente se supone.
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> (Bopp, Contribución al estudio de las letras alemanas en México 394)

Initially, Mexico's exposure to German culture was of an indirect type. Mexicans were aware of the importance of the German romantic school and of its influence on both

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[19] The secondary sources consulted for this section offer, for the most part, a rather incomplete picture of the European works which might have played a role in the shaping of Mexico's (or Latin America's) 19th century post-Independence literature. Hardly any reference is made (with the exception of the critical works of Fröschle, Bopp, Briesemeister and Hölz) to any other possible influences besides English and French literatures. Even among the critics who concentrate exclusively on the French and English influences, there appears to be no agreement (other than for the works of Chateaubriand and Walter Scott) about individual works available to the Latin American audiences. It is also important to remember that even though the present paper focuses primarily on the novel, foreign letters had an impact on other literary genres as well.

French and English romanticism, but they did not have much access to any German works as such. As time passed, several political, economic, social, and historical circumstances made it possible for Mexico to come into more direct contact with German literature. During the times when military and political confrontations put a strain on the relations between France and Mexico, France would lose its cultural monopoly over Mexico, making way to the entry of other foreign influences.

Depending on the political situation, the relationship with France would oscillate between friendship and enmity. The relationship with Germany was, with a few exceptions, generally one of affection and congeniality. Germany owed its good name to the favorable impression Alexander von Humboldt had made on the Mexican people on his visits to Mexico in the years 1803-04. Hoffmeister observes in Deutschland und Spanien. Geschichte und Dokumentation der literarischen Beziehungen: "Seit Alexander von Humboldts Forschungsreise durch den amerikanischen Subkontinent ist Deutschland nie mehr ganz aus dessen Gesichtskreis verschwunden" (188). To this day, Humboldt is celebrated in Mexico as one of the most highly esteemed German nationals to have ever honored the country and its people with their presence. In 1859 he was awarded the rare honorary title of "Benefactor of the Nation" in gratitude for his numerous contributions. His extensive writings, including the 30 volumes of Voyage aux régions équinoxiales du Nouveau Continent (1807/34), provided Europe with a detailed and realistic picture of the American continent. But, more importantly, the lack of prejudice with which he approached the peoples of Latin America taught them to see themselves in a different light and to take pride in their own cultures:

> Humboldt machte den Südamerikanern ihre eigene Geschichte erst richtig bewußt. Er wies sie darauf hin, daß die auf ihrem Boden gefundenen archäologischen Zeugnisse einer traditionsreichen Kultur entstammen, die sich gegenüber anderen Kulturen ebenbürtig behaupten kann. [...] Humboldt [...] ging völlig vorurteilslos an die ihm zuerst fremden Kulturen heran und versuchte

> sie in ihrem Eigenwert zu erfassen. Er ermutigte dadurch die einheimischen Künstler und Wissenschaftler, stolz auf die eigenen Traditionen zu sein und sich mit ihnen zu beschäftigen.
>
> (Von Hagen 204)

Up to the middle of the 18th century, very few Germans or, for that matter, any other European citizens of non-Spanish origin, had ventured to Mexico. Only a handful of German soldiers, miners, printers and other craftsmen, as well as members of the Jesuit order had settled in Mexico. The Spanish crown had established very strict immigration rules and anybody violating these faced the possibility of severe punishment. Towards the end of the 18th century and thanks to the spirit of liberalism that began to flood Spain, the authorities became more lenient. The visits of Humboldt to Mexico and his positive reports about the country and its people encouraged other Germans (specially scientists and naturalists like Humboldt) to consider Mexico as a potential country for immigrants. Their main interest lay in the study of Mexico's landscape and the exploration of its mineral deposits. The Mexican authorities initially welcomed these visits. Mexico's single most important source of income, its mines, had been severely neglected during the long wars of Independence. Germany was known for its expertise and advanced technology in this area, and the Mexican authorities hoped to attract enough foreign specialists to help in the much needed revitalization of the country's mining industry. As time progressed, the efforts to attract the immigration of German nationals expanded to other trades.

However, the attitude of the Mexican authorities towards foreign immigration was one of ambivalence. On several occasions, projects to facilitate the settlement of European immigrants were shattered by the conservative faction led by the Church: "Immer wenn die liberale Partei eine fortschrittliche Regierung zusammenstellen konnte und Gesetze zugunsten ausländischer Einwanderung, Religions- und Pressefreiheit durchzusetzen versuchte, verlor der Klerus keinen Augenblick, um einen Aufstand gegen diese Regierung anzuzetteln" (Bopp, "Die Deutschen in Mexiko" 482). Requests for immigration were often ignored and left unanswered by the Mexican authorities. Reports of harsh travelling conditions, political anarchy, intolerance towards foreigners, and lack of government subsidies, further discouraged many potential immigrants from settling in Mexico. Many of them ended up in the United States instead.

Then, during the time of the French intervention and the empire of Maximilian, a higher number of Europeans (mostly French, Austrian, and German) came to Mexico than ever before. Many of them, however, were speculators and adventurers, and they left the country almost as fast as they arrived. After the retreat of the French troops in 1866, many of the foreigners that were still in the country were killed or forced to flee: the attitude of the Mexicans towards foreigners had become more hostile than ever before. Nonetheless, the spirit of trade and economic exchange that had been awakened during the years of the French domination persisted. The development of closer German-Mexican relations was the direct result of this phenomenon. Trade relations with the "Norddeutsche Bund" became very significant, and by 1868 Germany had become Mexico's main trade partner. Over two thirds of Mexico's foreign trade was carried out with Hamburg-based merchants.

The English, the French, and the Americans also had wide economic interests in Mexico, and a great part of the local industry was controlled by foreign hands. Only the Germans, though, were regarded without the kind of distrust and resentment that was often displayed towards foreigners. In 1851, the attaché of the Prussian envoy to Mexico observed: "Es sei deutlich, daß vor allen anderen Fremden die Deutschen vom Mexikaner am meisten geliebt, geachtet und geschätzt würden [...]" (qtd. in Bopp, "Die Deutschen in Mexiko" 482). The reasons underlying the positive feelings towards German nationals was that Germany, unlike France, Spain, or the United States, had never attempted, or even desired, to subjugate Mexico on a political level: "[...] die in Mexico wohnenden Deutschen [haben] keine Veranlassung noch Lust, sich in die staatlichen Angelegenheiten Mexicos tätig einzumischen, da sie nicht Deutschmexikaner, sondern kaiserl.-königl. Reichsdeutsche sind" (qtd. in Bopp 519). But above all, the Germans continued to owe their popularity to the good impression that Alexander von Humboldt had made in the hearts and minds of the Mexicans over half a century earlier.

During the 19th century the German community in Mexico was relatively small compared to that of countries like the U.S., Argentina, or Brazil (immigration picked up a little during the last third of the 19th century, and again in the 20th century after World War I).[20] The Germans residing in Mexico generally kept to themselves, and avoided meddling in public matters. They did not show much interest in assimilating the Mexican culture, but continued instead to consider themselves as Germans or *Auslandsdeutsche*.[21] Many wanted to return one day to Germany, and therefore decided to do everything in their means so that they and their children could remain in touch with their German roots, including the importation and distribution of German books, newspapers, and magazines; the publication of German language newsletters and magazines; the foundation of clubs and associations; and further, the establishment of schools under the direction of German teachers.

The German publications were intended originally for the use of the German community, but they began to receive the attention of an increasing number of Mexican scholars—with Altamirano in the forefront—who were interested in the study of foreign languages and literatures, and for whom the knowledge of French as the only foreign language available to them was not sufficient anymore. They were aware that the knowledge of other foreign languages would give them a better and more direct access to the literatures of the Western world, allowing them to read the works in the original and to produce their own translations instead of having to rely on second or third hand translations.[22] As early as 1844, Luis Martínez de Castro published a long article in El ateneo mexicano about the literary value of the German language:

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[20] In 1870 there are reports of approximately 500-2000 Germans living in Mexico, with most of them residing in Mexico City (Briesemeister 37).

[21] Ratzel, a German living in Mexico at the time, observes: "Wenn [die Deutschen] sich auch so weit in die Sitten und Anschauungen der Mexikaner schicken, als aus geschäftlichen Rücksichten nothwendig [sic], so fällt es ihnen doch nicht ein, sich auch nur zum Schein näher an dieselben anzuschließen" (qtd. in Briesemeister 38).

> La lengua alemana ha tenido que luchar largo tiempo con preocupaciones arraigadas, y particularmente en Francia, los mejores autores la han designado con los nombres de *bárbara* y *tudesca*. Pero, desde que las grandes obras de Wieland, Schiller y Goëthe [sic], han encontrado traductores capaces de dar a conocer las bellezas de la literatura alemana, se ha corregido la desfavorable opinión que tan injustamente se había concebido de una de las lenguas más hermosas de Europa, . . . veremos que no hay lengua más fácil que la alemana para apropiarse la belleza de todas las lenguas, pues Voss ha imitado en su idioma a Homero y a Virgilio, Schleiermacher ha reproducido los diálogos de Platón; y ninguna nación ha traducido hasta ahora las lenguas modernas con la perfección que los Schlegel, Malsburg, Gries y Tieck, que han reproducido en su lengua casi literalmente las obras maestras de Shakespeare, de Ariosto, de Tasso, de Calderón, de Cervantes y de Zorrilla.
>
> (qtd. in Bopp, Contribución ... 42-43)

Ignacio M. Altamirano expressed similar concerns, and so did many of the other liberally oriented writers and intellectuals who belonged to his circle of friends and colleagues, including famous names like: Jorge Hammeken y Mexía (of Mexican-German parentage), José Sebastián Segura, Rafael Cosmes y Cossío, Balbino Dávalos, José González de la Torre, Francisco Granados Maldonado, José María de Heredia,

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[22] "Pero ya desde los primeros aleteos del nuevo espíritu del México independiente, todos los hombres ilustrados reconocen la inmensa importancia y necesidad de abrir nuevos horizontes a los intelectuales por medio de buenas traducciones de literaturas extranjeras y la enseñanza de idiomas. Continuamente los intelectuales mexicanos de la época se quejan de la falta de conocimientos en este respecto, de la lamentable necesidad de estar obligados a contentarse con traducciones que ya han atravesado otro idioma y por eso se han transformado totalmente" (Bopp, Contribución al estudio de las letras alemanas en México 41).

Luis Martínez de Castro, Francisco Pimentel, Guillermo Prieto, Ignacio Ramírez "El Nigromante", José María Roa Bárcena, Manuel María Romero, and Rafael de Zayas Enríquez. Some of them had been Altamirano's teachers, others his students or personal friends, but all of them shared the desire to learn as much as possible about German culture and literature. Like Castro, they were aware that only a few Mexicans knew the German language well enough to read German works in the original. And most readers had never had much exposure to German literature other than in the form of French or Spanish translations. An article in the newspaper El eco de ambos mundos (1874) illustrates the situation:

> El poco conocimiento que se tiene en México de los idiomas extranjeros hace que los buenos modelos de las literaturas inglesa y alemana sean leídos apenas, y ningún escritor podrá adelantar en las letras, si no bebe la inspiración de las obras inmortales que han producido los pueblos septentrionales de Europa [...]
>
> (qtd. in Bopp 44)

And one of the German-language newspapers printed in Mexico (El correo germánico, 1876) introduced a special edition in Spanish with the following remarks:

> Pero vista la dificultad que ofrece el idioma alemán a los hijos de la raza latina, y a la circunstancia de que sólo hace pocos años se extiende en la república el estudio del idioma de Schiller y Goethe, estos periódicos [alemanes], por científica y hábil que haya sido su redacción, han circulado en órbitas demasiado estrechas para poder ejercer influencia alguna en la opinión pública y para formar un lazo fraternal entre mexicanos y alemanes.
>
> (qtd. in Bopp 44-45)

According to Marianne Bopp, however, the situation was not as grim as depicted in these comments (45). There were actually increased efforts to promote the study of German, and also to offer more and better translations of German works. Many writers and scholars (most of them from the circle of Altamirano) were producing their own translations and publishing them in popular journals and newspapers. As much as possible they tried to translate directly from German into Spanish, although in many cases they still had to rely on French translations. Rafael de Zayas Enríquez's translations of Goethe, and José Sebastián Segura's translations of Schiller are considered to be the best direct German-Spanish translations published at the time. Segura's translations have often been compared to those of the acclaimed Spanish romantic of German descent, Juan E. Hartzenbusch (Bopp 190). Apart from Schiller and Goethe, the most frequently translated German authors at the time were Geßner, Klopstock, Winkelmann, and Lessing as representatives of the enlightenment; the preromantics or romantics Jean Paul and Hölderlin; the romantics Novalis and E.T.A. Hoffmann; the late romantic Heinrich Heine; Rückert and Uhland as representatives of the Biedermeier epoch; Immermann, who wrote novels and dramas of late romantic, realist and historical tendencies; and Platen, whose lyric poetry combines the themes of romanticism with the forms of classicism. Within a short time, Altamirano and his colleagues managed to expedite the dissemination of German literature in Mexico.

They would have not been as successful, however, without the support of the German community, especially from people like Oloardo Hassey, Isidoro Epstein, Ludwig Hahn, Emil Katthain, Juan Federico Jens, Rudolf Ackermann, the Baron Othón E. de Brackel-Welda, Enrique G. Rébsamen, and Dr. Hugo Topf, among others. These men owned bookstores, printing shops, and newspapers, or else worked as journalists, teachers, and translators. They developed good friendships with some of the most prominent Mexican scholars and writers of the time, and quite often worked in close collaboration with them. One of the first and best known teachers of German language and literature in Mexico was Oloardo Hassey (originally Hasse). Not much is known about his origin other than that he was born in Germany in 1816, and that he came to

Mexico in 1843 as an employee of one of the German mining companies operating in Mexico. He was a very cultivated man, fluent in Spanish, French, English, Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. In 1845 he became professor at the "Colegio de Minería", and from 1868 to 1888 he taught German and Greek at the "Preparatoria Nacional".[23]

Around 1850, Hassey published the first edition of Gramática alemana, o método práctico para aprender el alemán (the 2nd edition appeared in 1857), a German grammar book especially designed for native Spanish speakers; in 1852 and 1854 respectively, he published the first and second volumes of the Estudios de la literatura alemana, the only history of German literature that was written and published in Mexico. Apart from his activities as a teacher, Hassey wrote articles and translations which appeared in all the important newspapers and journals of the time, and he also worked in close connection with some of Mexico's best known liberal writers and intellectuals, including Altamirano (Bopp, "Die Deutschen in Mexico" 515).

Isidoro Epstein was another key figure in the establishment of German-Mexican literary relations. After arriving in Mexico in 1851, he taught at several schools and universities. In 1864 he switched careers to become a journalist. His printing shop "La Bohemia Literaria" was responsible for the production and distribution of a great number of the German works (in both the original and in translation) that were available in Mexico at that time. Two of Mexico's most popular Spanish-language newspapers (El eco de ambos mundos and Altamirano's El precursor) were also printed there. Epstein was further the founder and editor of the famous German language newspapers Vorwärts (published between 1872-76) and Germania (published between 1886-94).

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[23] German was first taught in Mexico at the "Colegio de Minería". This school had been founded in 1792 by Fausto de Elhuyar, director of the Mexican ministry of mining, and a graduate of the world-famous academy of mining in Freiberg. For decades the "Colegio de Minería" remained the center for the learning of German in Mexico. German classes had been introduced there at first to familiarize Mexican students with the technical terms used in the field (textbooks were usually not available in Spanish translation at the time), as well as to facilitate the communication between students and instructors. Soon after, the classes also turned to subjects like German literature and culture, thanks to the enthusiasm of both students and staff.

Vorwärts was the first and by far the most important German language publication in Mexico (it even beat Epstein's own later edition of the Germania). It usually contained book reviews and excerpts of famous German and Mexican works.

Even though Vorwärts was oriented primarily to serve the German community in Mexico, it stands out from the other German language publications of its kind because it had been founded with the explicit mandate to establish a bridge between the two cultures:

> Einerseits soll der*Vorwärts* das Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl der in der Diaspora lebenden Deutschen stärken ... und Bindeglied zur fernen Heimat sein. Andererseits verfolgte Epstein auch ein kulturpolitisch-erzieherisches Ziel mit seiner Zeitung, die "dem Mexicaner ... als handliches Hülfsmittel für das Studium der deutschen Sprache, Bildung und Gesinnung dienen" und das "wahre Deutschthum" vertreten soll. ... Er plant nämlich eine Art Feuilleton mit "kleinen Bruchstücken aus den besten deutschen Classikern" in deutscher und spanischer Sprache, eine literarische Anthologie in Zeitungsfolgen. Es sollten außerdem auch Originalerzählungen moderner deutscher Schriftsteller aufgenommen werden. So würde das Wochenblatt auf seine Weise einen Beitrag leisten zur Verbreitung der deutschen Literatur in Mexiko ...
>
> (Briesemeister 33)

Epstein's main goal was to promote the knowledge and understanding of German literature in Mexico, and to a lesser extent to introduce German readers to Mexican literature via translation. Articles in Spanish were common (for a while the Vorwärts even published a Sunday supplement in Spanish with the title Sonntags Blatt), and collaborations by Ignacio Altamirano, Manuel María Romero, José Sebastián Segura, José María Vigil, Rafael de Zayas Enríquez, and others, appeared regularly in Vorwärts and later in Germania.[24]

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[24] Most other publications directed at the German community were not interested in attracting Mexican readers, and therefore kept the number of Spanish contributions to a minimum (articles in

* The main focus of this chapter was to show that along with Mexico's political independence from Spain came the desire to capture cultural independence. The process of cultural, and specifically of literary emancipation, though, was much slower than the political one. Political and social unrest rendered the voyage of the novel from childhood, through adolescence and into adulthood a difficult one. In spite of a few exceptions, the earliest one being Lizardi, not much was achieved in this direction until the sixth and seventh decades of the 19th century. The break with the European tradition was also not as sudden or complete as one would have imagined judging from the anti-imperialistic state of mind that reigned amongst the liberal circles. For a good part of the 19th century, Mexican narrative adhered closely to the literary models (mostly French, Spanish, and English) that were being imported from overseas. Many writers were afraid to depart from the European models because of their own limited experience with literary form and style. It was also extremely difficult for the Mexican mentality to let go of the notion that whatever came from Europe was better. Not without reason had three hundred years of political and cultural domination eroded Mexico's identity, as well as the people's trust in the artistic value of their native heritage.

The situation began to change gradually after the execution of Maximilian in 1867. At that time, Mexico's political and intellectual circles started to register increased feelings of unity and national pride. The writers, and especially the novelists, began to turn their eyes to their own local reality, and specifically to the events which had just threatened Mexico's sovereignty. As in many other countries under similar socio-cultural circumstances, the historical novel became the novel of choice. The Mexican historical novel was didactic and doctrinaire in nature, and heavily influenced by political liberalism. Its main characteristic was the inclusion of a greater proportion of

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Spanish were only added to boost circulation as a means to enhance sales figures and profit). Sales of German language newspapers were normally limited to around 300 copies (the biggest Mexican newspaper on the market had a circulation of approximately 2000 copies).

Mexican subject matter, as well as the conscious effort to improve style and form. Mexican writers continued to follow the European models at first, especially the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott, Alexandre Dumas, and the Spaniard Fernández y González. But unlike the kind of servile imitation that had occurred earlier, many authors were now determined to come up with an authentic form of expression. Foreign works were from then on to be used ideally only as learning tools. German literature in particular, was considered worthy of emulation. A special effort was hence made to increase the amount and quality of German works that both writers and readers were exposed to.

Chapter 2

The previous chapter provided a historical overview of the Mexican novel in the 19th century and outlined the internal and external influences that had an impact on its development. It was mentioned that the romantic movement in Mexico was led by the desire to establish a literary tradition untouched by European standards. This was easier said than done: for a great part of the 19th century writers continued to borrow indiscriminately from Europe's literary masterpieces. Things began to change in the late 1860's after the expulsion of the French troops and the execution of the Emperor Maximilian. The increased feelings of patriotism unleashed by these events were also expressed in the cultural arena in which Ignacio M. Altamirano played a leading role.

Before Altamirano, others had worked—consciously or unconsciously—towards the creation of a national literature, but nobody had formulated a concrete plan of action for the attainment of this goal. For almost thirty years, Altamirano dedicated his life and work to this task. He believed that the creation of a national literature would help to define the country's identity, and to secure its position as a politically and culturally independent nation: "Altamirano es la figura clave del proyecto cultural mestizo, de ese despegue cultural [...], en el cual hay una profunda conciencia de lo nacional" (Sefchovich 34). Altamirano wanted Mexico's literature to become the faithful expression of its national character, and therefore the integrating force of its culture.

Mexico's literary awakening in the late 1860's (or "el renacimiento" as some critics have called it after the journal founded by Altamirano in 1869) coincided with the last stages of Mexican romanticism. Although it was still romantic in spirit, this new movement was more sober and restrained, tending less towards the overidealization of characters, situations, and surroundings (Gálvez 101), and including an increasing number of realist and *costumbrista* elements. Between 1867, the year after the ending of the French intervention, and 1890, the year in which romanticism was finally displaced by modernism, Altamirano played a fundamental role in the development of Mexico's narrative tradition.

Aware of how strongly Mexico's novels were still influenced by foreign models, Altamirano's main goal became to convince his fellow writers that they should not imitate these works, but that they should use them merely as tools in the search of a form of expression of their own: "En los monumentos de la iiteratura extranjera, buscaba ante todo la enseñanza que habría que aplicar a la incipiente literatura mexicana, la lección histórica que debería guiar sus pasos" (Altamirano, La literatura nacional xii). In his history and criticism of Mexican literature, Altamirano showed the wealth of possibilities that Mexico offered to any aspiring young writer: the glory of previous civilizations, the conquest, the refusal of the Aztecs to mix with the conquerors and to accept their religion, the beauty of the Mexican landscape, the countless native legends and customs that had survived centuries of Spanish domination, etc. He also pointed to the number of books on Mexico written by ill-informed foreigners, and deplored the fact that the greatest experts in indigenous culture and languages were foreign nationals. Altamirano wanted to see more Mexican scholars study the indigenous languages. He himself pursued the study of indigenous languages as a way to affirm his "mexicanism".

As part of his plan to create a national literature, Altamirano promoted a better-informed, more systematic way to study foreign literatures. He himself explored the European literatures with great eagerness. This is apparent in his critical articles, essays and book reviews, as well as in his novels and short fiction. Ever since his early years as a student at the "Instituto Literario de Toluca", Altamirano invested a substantial amount of time and effort in the study of foreign literatures. Where others had been satisfied with acquiring little more than a superficial knowledge of these works, Altamirano had explored them with great dedication. As José Luis Martínez indicates in the foreword of La literatura nacional (1949). Altamirano's knowledge of foreign literatures surpassed that of most of his contemporaries:

> Admira al lector [...] la riqueza de los dominios culturales que poseía Altamirano. Fué acaso el primer mexicano que, en los principios mismos de su carrera literaria, hacia 1868, exploró con inteligente curiosidad literaturas como la inglesa, la alemana, la norteamericana y la hispanoamericana, que en su tiempo continuaban siendo desconocidas para la mayoría de nuestros hombres de letras. (xi)

Prior to the efforts of Altamirano, the Mexican public had been exposed mainly to French and Spanish literatures, or to French or Spanish translations. English, German, Italian, Russian, North American, Latin American, and even the latest Spanish authors such as Núñez de Arce, Avellaneda, and Bécquer were hardly known at the time (Batis 88). By steering the public's attention towards literatures other than French and Spanish, Altamirano inaugurated a whole new era in the kinds of foreign works that were read in Mexico. Thanks to him, many previously unknown works made their début in Mexico. Of special interest to us is the opinion Altamirano had of Germany, as well as the extent of the knowledge he had about this country's history and culture. The present chapter will provide a general picture of Altamirano's life and work, and will also introduce the most relevant opinions he held about German culture and literature. This will be done by exploring some of his most prominent critical writings. The following chapter will then focus on the impact his knowledge of German literature had on his narrative fiction.

Ignacio Manuel Altamirano

Ignacio Manuel Altamirano was born in the remote mountain village of Tixtla, in the state of Guerrero, on November 13th, 1834. His parents Francisco Altamirano and Gertrudis Basilio were both of Aztec origin. They had adopted the Spanish family name of Altamirano in honor of the Spaniard Juan Altamirano who had been the godfather of one of their ancestors. Ignacio's parents spoke only *náhuatl*, and their greatest ambition in life was to take care of their little farm. Ignacio was not allowed to sit in the same class room with the white upper-class or the *mestizo* middle-class children. At the time, segregation was still the norm: the white children received classes in Spanish together with a small number of *mestizos* who belonged to a yet not-too-numerous middle class. While these children enjoyed the best instruction available, indigenous children learned only a minimum of reading and the catechism.

It was not until Ignacio's father became mayor of Tixtla for the second time in 1842, that Ignacio was allowed to join the "rational beings" at school. At age 14 he finally learned the Spanish language. Since he was a very bright student, he was encouraged to compete for a scholarship for "underprivileged" (that is "indigenous" children) which was being sponsored by the progressive teacher and liberal writer Ignacio Ramírez ("El Nigromante"). After winning the scholarship, Altamirano left his home town to attend classes at the "Instituto Literario de Toluca". Once there, he became one of the favorite pupils of Ignacio Ramírez[25]. In the prologue he wrote in 1889 for an edition of the works of Ignacio Ramírez, Altamirano pointed out that without the sponsorship of Ramírez he would have been destined to waste away in misery and ignorance like so many others of his class and race. Interestingly, Altamirano describes himself as a "semi-savage", and attributes his transformation to what he learned at the hands of the teachers at the "Instituto Literario de Toluca":

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[25] Ignacio Ramírez was one of the most influential figures in the life of Altamirano. The spirit of liberalism and laicism that guided Altamirano's writings throughout his life have their origin in the teachings he received from Ramírez during the early years of his formal education.

> Yo, muy joven, pues apenas tenía quince años, y acabando de llegar del sur, comprendiendo con trabajo la lengua española, y casi incomunicado por mi timidez rústica y semisalvaje, tenía poquísimo conocimiento acerca de los hombres y de los sucesos de México. [...] lleno de gratitud, me propuse indagar quién era el autor principal de aquella ley, merced a la cual se me abría el camino de la instrucción. Aquella ley no sólo me había favorecido a mí, sino también a otros muchos jóvenes indígenas del Estado de México, pobrísimos como yo, y como yo condenados seguramente, si tal disposición no hubiera venido a salvarnos, a arrastrar una vida de ignorancia y miseria.
>
> (qtd. in La literatura nacional II:191-92)

It did not take long for Altamirano to discover his strong interest in literature. He began to write essays and poems, and became well versed in Latin and French. In return for tuition he worked at the school's library. This gave him the opportunity to get exposed to most of the national and foreign works available to the Mexican reading public at the time. Altamirano's initial contact with European literature included a substantial number of works that had been written from a liberal point of view, such as Voltaire's Candide, Rousseau's Émile, and Robertson's The History of America (Nacci 24). During his school years and later, Altamirano considered the works of Shakespeare and Dickens, and of the North Americans Longfellow and Cooper, as some of the world's finest pieces of literature. There is evidence that he read Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy and Sentimental Journey, and Oliver Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield in the original. He must also have read Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's Paul et Virginie in the original, since a Spanish translation did not become available until 1879. Under the guidance of Ramírez, Altamirano wrote a prize-winning paper on

Goldsmith's novel The Vicar of Wakefield in 1851. In that same year he also published his first verses (Nacci 23-25).

After Ignacio Ramírez and the other liberal professors at the "Instituto Literario de Toluca" were ousted from the institute due to political conflicts among the staff members, Altamirano was subjected to such a high degree of hostility and intolerance by the remaining conservative staff that he left the institute a short time later. For a while, he taught French and Latin in another private school in Toluca. In 1854, Altamirano moved to Mexico City where he enrolled in the "Academia de San Juan de Letrán" as a student of law, but he interrupted his studies in the same year to participate in the revolution of Ayutla. The "Academia de Letrán" was at that time one of the centers of intellectual activity in Mexico. Altamirano began to be increasingly popular among his fellow students. Soon the brightest and most restless students searched out his company. His room became the meeting place for those interested in editing the students' newspaper, or in discussing the latest literary and political trends. It is also at that time that Altamirano began to attend Congress to listen to the speeches of Ramírez and the other liberals he admired. In spite of his busy schedule, Altamirano never forgot to continue to study the foreign masterpieces. The students of the "Academia de Letrán" often held translation tournaments in which it was not uncommon to find poems by Goethe and Schiller next to the more traditional poets of Greek and Roman antiquity.

In 1857, Altamirano received his law degree, and began to write for the press. A year later he participated in the war of Reform, and from 1863 to 1867—the time of the French intervention and reign of Maximilian—he served in the liberal army as a colonel. Altamirano's involvement in the major armed struggles during the 1850's and 1860's, as well as the several governmental positions he held throughout his life as member of the Congress, as attorney general of the Supreme Court, and as a diplomat, are evidence of his profound commitment to his country, and of the awareness he had at all times of the latest developments and events affecting Mexico. This awareness is also a distinct feature of Altamirano's writings, especially in the case of his political, historical and critical articles, speeches and essays. The circumstances of his own origin gave Altamirano a good insight into the poor living conditions of Mexico's indigenous rural population, whereas most other members of the governing classes were not aware of the plight of the popular classes.

This awareness is not as apparent in Altamirano's works of narrative fiction. The settings Altamirano chose for his novels, as well as the historical background and some of his secondary characters are typically Mexican. Many other elements in his novels, however, are heavily indebted to the European romantic tradition. His native characters, for example, seem to be morally superior to those with blond hair and blue eyes, but their resemblance to any true Indian is purely physical. Their personality and outlook on life are shaped in reality after the standards of Europe's literary tradition. Altamirano's success as a novelist depended largely on the acceptance of his works by mostly white or *mestizo*, middle and upper class readers. Aware that many of his contemporaries still saw themselves as superior to their full-blooded Indian brothers and sisters, he did not want to antagonize anyone by intrusive references to his origin or that of his characters.

This does not mean, however, that Altamirano was ashamed of his Indian heritage. He loved the indigenous but did not use it as a weapon, nor as a shield (Nacci 48). Altamirano's attitude towards his origin can best be described with the same words he used as he addressed the opening of the tenth Congress on October 13, 1881:

> Yo no me enorgullezco de ser indio, ni me siento humillado, porque nadie tiene la discreción de nacer en tal o cual raza de las que constituyen el género humano. El mérito consiste en confesar que se ha nacido en esa raza y en confesar que en cualesquiera de ellas tiene uno el carácter de hombre; así que yo lo confieso siempre que puedo, ingenuamente, sin orgullo como sin humillación; pero tengo

> el gusto de diferenciarme de muchos que perteneciendo a cierta raza, tienen vergüenza de confesarlo.
>
> (qtd. in Altamirano, Obras literarias completas xviii)

While his works of narrative fiction do not include too many overt references to Mexico's native element, his remaining writings are proof of the contrary. His speeches are filled with expressions of love for his homeland, for literature, for progress, and for the human race. The lyrics he wrote during the second and third decades of his life describe the landscapes in which he found refuge as a child, and which he considered, even as an adult, as the source of his creativity. In his feature articles on Mexican civilization and culture he often praised the elegance of the prehispanic languages, and was proud of the fact that the Spanish colonizers had not managed to eradicate the languages, manners and customs of Mexico's indigenous population. His historical writings often times include the celebration of a glorious albeit mysterious and painful indigenous and colonial past, combined with the hope for a brighter future based on the promises of industrial and economic progress.

Altamirano was the first Mexican historian to acknowledge that the war between classes was the real moving force behind history. As a historian he worshipped Cuauhtémoc, Hidalgo and Morelos as Mexico's greatest heroes. He realized before anyone else that although the movement of independence had been conceived as a popular movement, in the end it had been the colonial aristocracy who had benefited from its achievement. He regretted the fact that Mexico had never been allowed to completely fulfill its potential as a free nation due to the internal warfare brought on by the voracity of the dominant classes. He defended the working classes in many of his articles, and his patriotism brought him close to the people and to the defense of their interests. He condemned the conservatives, and anyone else who would betray the legitimate interests of Mexico. He basically helped to build the bridge between the liberalism of the 19th century and the social ideals of 20th century Mexico.

Altamirano's authority began to fade after his departure for Spain in 1889 where he served as consul general for a brief period of time before transferring to the Mexican consulate in Paris. According to some, it was Altamirano's increasing opposition to the ideas of the *porfiristas* that had caused him to be sent (or in other words to be exiled) on a diplomatic mission to Europe. Altamirano's departure from Mexico coincided in time with the last breaths of Mexican romanticism. Once in Europe, his busy schedule and the decline of his health caused him to neglect his writing (his last two novels Atenea and Beatriz remained unfinished). He died in San Remo on February 13th, 1893 at the age of 59 (curiously, he had always been afraid of the number "13") after he had travelled to Italy in search of relief from a serious illness. The following year, his old friends and collaborators tried to reinstate the publication of El renacimiento. Just like its forerunner, the new El renacimiento did not remain in circulation for very long. It was soon supplanted by Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera's La revista azul, the official emblem of modernism (Batis 102).

After having become a recognized member of the highest social, intellectual and political circles, a circle to which only a few fortunate ones had access, there was little in Altamirano's bearing and behaviour (other than his physiognomy) that served as a reminder of his humble origin. As Nacci documents, Altamirano was an extremely capable and entertaining conversationalist who kept up with the thought, sentiment, and expression of North and South America and Europe (33). Socially, he had the manners of a true gentleman, he was gallant, noble, and always in good taste. Even his living quarters were decorated in a simple, elegant, but nonetheless unmistakably European fashion. Altamirano had become completely acculturated, and he could never have returned to the life he had known as a child. Life would have been a torment away from the bourgeois life style he had become accustomed to in Mexico City. Nonetheless, he saw this type of acculturation as a blessing. Thanks to the opportunity he had been given to attend school with the "privileged" children, he had been transformed from a "semi-savage" to one of the most cultured gentlemen of the Western world. He believed in sharing with everybody the benefits of education by making education universally accessible to every single Mexican.

"Literatura nacional"

As mentioned in chapter 1, a good deal of what had been portrayed in Mexican novels written earlier in the 19th century was totally unrelated to Mexico, to its people, and to the kind of literary expression that was needed to reflect the historical, social, and political circumstances of the country. Altamirano had been dismayed many times to see that his fellow writers—and the reading public in general—despised everything Mexican, preferring instead European settings and fair skinned protagonists. One of Altamirano's priorities was to make his contemporaries aware that Mexico's history offered at least as many riches as any other nation's. Altamirano argued that Fenimore Cooper had found enough material in his native North America to produce a novel that was in no way inferior to that of his English counterpart Sir Walter Scott: "¿Pues acaso Fenimore Cooper tuvo más ricos elementos para crear la novela americana y rivalizar con Walter Scott en originalidad y fuerza de imaginación?" (qtd. in Alegría 58). Altamirano regarded Scott as the father of the historical novel, and recommended the works of Dumas and Cooper, of the Spaniard Fernández y González, and of the Argentinian José Mármol because of their description of historical events. He reasoned that Mexican writers should be able to do the same thing: prehispanic times, the conquest, the Spanish domination, the wars of independence, the French intervention, and the restoration of the republic, offered a rich variety of material for any novelist interested in producing an original work. To this end he states in the Revistas literarias de México, published in 1868:

> ¿Acaso en nuestra patria no hay un campo vastísimo de que pueda sacar provecho el novelista, el historiador y el poeta para sus leyendas, sus estudios y sus epopeyas o sus dramas? [...] ¡Oh!, si algo es rico en elementos para el literato, es este país, del mismo modo que lo es para el minero, para el agricultor y para el industrial. [...] La historia antigua de México es una mina inagotable. [...] Los tres siglos de la dominación española son un manantial de leyendas poéticas y magníficas. [...] Nuestras guerras civiles son ricas en episodios, y notables por sus resultados...
>
> (qtd. in Sánchez 126)

Despite his appeal for the production of works with a larger proportion of Mexican subject matter, Altamirano continued to study and admire Europe's literary tradition. Instead of rejecting it on the base of some anti-colonialist attitude, he saw the European masterpieces as examples from which less experienced writers could learn quite a bit. Altamirano was aware that Mexican letters were still in their infancy, and in need of guidance. His critical writings are therefore filled with comments and suggestions about foreign authors, schools and works, and on how to apply their teachings for the benefit of Mexico's developing narrative. Altamirano maintained that it was absolutely necessary to study the masterpieces of European literature in order to: "[...] recoger las más novedosas corrientes de la literatura moderna y adaptarlas para producir obras cuyo contenido típicamente mexicano reflejara un propósito universal" (Alegría 58). He exhorted his readers to study Europe's literature as the first step towards finding their own form of expression (Revistas literarias de México, 1868):

> No negamos la gran utilidad de estudiar todas las escuelas literarias del mundo civilizado; seríamos incapaces de este desatino, nosotros que adoramos los

> recuerdos clásicos... No; al contrario, creemos que estos estudios son indispensables; pero deseamos que se cree una literatura absolutamente nuestra, como todos los pueblos tienen, los cuales también estudian los monumentos de los otros, pero no fundan su orgullo en imitarlos servilmente.
>
> (qtd. in Sánchez 127)

Altamirano warned repeatedly against the kind of "servile imitation" that had become quite commonplace in the past:

> Mientras que nos limitemos a imitar la novela francesa, cuya forma es inadaptable a nuestras costumbres y a nuestro modo de ser, no haremos sino pálidas y mezquinas imitaciones, así como no hemos producido más que cantos débiles imitando a los trovadores españoles y a los poetas ingleses y a los franceses ...
>
> (qtd. in Warner 49)

Altamirano's plans for the development of a national literature are scattered throughout the numerous letters, prologues, reviews, articles, speeches, essays, novels, novellas, and other miscellaneous prose that Altamirano wrote over a thirty year period of his life, and which fill more than 12,000 pages (Nacci 4). Altamirano did not favor any literary genre in particular, but experimented with all of them. His essays, articles, and speeches in the areas of literary criticism and literary historiography are those which best express the details of his agenda. Worthy of particular mention are his essays "De la poesía épica y de la poesía lírica en 1870" and "Carta a una poetisa" (1871) which give insight to Altamirano's view on a series of subjects including German literature.

In accordance with the practices prevalent at the time, Altamirano's works appeared first in a variety of journals and newspapers and not in book form. Some of the most important periodicals of the time were the Revistas literarias de México, El renacimiento, and the Crónicas de la semana (a weekly supplement to El renacimiento), which were all publications that Altamirano had founded and directed himself. Altamirano also participated in the foundation of several other periodicals, including El correo de México (founded in 1867 in collaboration with Guillermo Prieto and Ignacio Ramírez), El federalista (founded in 1871 in conjunction with Manuel Payno), La tribuna (founded in 1875), and La república (founded in 1880). But El renacimiento (founded in 1869) was probably the most famous of them all. Despite financial difficulties that forced the editors to stop production only one year after the appearance of the first number, El renacimiento was different from the other journals that had existed up to that time. El renacimiento was Mexico's first *literary* journal, and its biggest mandate was to promote Mexico's literary independence. El renacimiento was intended to serve as: "el órgano que haga popular en nuestro país la literatura nacional, y el repertorio en que más tarde se examinen los grados de adelanto literario de la época presente" (Batis 102). El renacimiento also became the role model for future literary journals: in the decade alone following the appearance of El renacimiento, about 35 similar publications appeared on the market.

Even though El renacimiento was not a literary journal in the modern sense of the term, it provided writers with the unprecedented opportunity to express their ideas regardless of their political alliance. Unlike its modern day equivalents, El renacimiento commonly featured articles about the latest trends not only in literature, but also in music, theatre and the visual arts. In accordance with Altamirano's varied interests, and with the common practices of some of the most important European periodicals of that period, it was also quite normal to find news items about the latest discoveries in areas as diverse as geography, mineralogy, archaeology, linguistics, and philology. Batis's comments about El renacimiento are as following:

> Era una revista literaria-cultural, miscelánea y didáctica, en cuanto que incluía ficción y poesía e informaba de cuestiones de crítica, historia, arqueología,

> pintura, música, teatro y ediciones. El resultado fue una crónica, un espejo del panorama cultural, un registro de las producciones más notables [...] De todo se habló en aquellas páginas, a condición de que llenara los fines de amenidad, sobre todo de utilidad y belleza. (84)

The literary contributions consisted of poetry, short stories, novels or novellas (published in the form of installments), translations, book reviews, literary criticism, as well as notices of the latest book editions available to the public.

It is amazing to discover that a high proportion of the contributions of foreign origin contained in El renacimiento were German. El renacimiento became notorious in particular for its inclusion of German poetry: "Puede decirse que el estro poético de *El Renacimiento* se distinguió por su germanofilia, que si se confundía con los sentimentalones Uhland y Gessner [...], no se olvida de rendir homenaje a los idealistas, incluido Novalis" (Batis 89). Translations of poems by Goethe, Schiller, and the Germans romantics, among others, were a common feature, outnumbering even some of the most famous British, American, and French poets like Byron, Poe, Lamartine, Musset and Hugo, who had been well known in Mexico before the arrival of the German poets. The reason for Altamirano's predilection for German poetry had to do with the fact that he believed that German and Latin American poets had a special passion for nature that neither Spanish nor French poets shared. This idea is reflected in Altamirano's famous essay "De la poesía épica y de la poesía lírica en 1870" (first published in installments in El federalista in the year 1871):

> No: cada país debe tener su poesía original. Garcilaso, Villegas y todos los españoles, están bien en España. Los franceses deben servir de modelos en Francia. Apenas los alemanes pueden asemejarse algo a los americanos del sur. ¿Por qué? Por su amor a la naturaleza, al realismo. Los poetas alemanes también traducen en su lira los acentos de la naturaleza. He ahí su mérito. (emphasis added)
>
> (qtd. in Obras literarias completas 624)

In the introduction to the first number of El renacimiento, Altamirano asked everybody to join in the effort, regardless of their political adherence. Mexico's writers had always been quite politicized, with liberals and conservatives fighting over everything from subject matter to form (the conservatives were usually more concerned about proper form, the liberals about coming up with an original plot). Prior to El renacimiento, writers had to rely on the political press for the publication of their poetry or fiction. Their contributions were only accepted if they conformed to the political orientation of the journal in question. Altamirano, on the other hand, believed in freedom of expression, and therefore welcomed the contributions of anybody, regardless of his or her ideology, as long as they shared the need to develop a unified national literature. Altamirano's only condition was that El renacimiento stay clear from any direct political or religious debate. Writers who wanted to engage in such polemics could always do so in one of the other ten or so politically oriented publications available at the time. Surprisingly, Altamirano's initiative was accepted without much resistance, and everybody—whether liberal or conservative, young or old, famous or not—decided to co-operate. For the first time in decades, writers belonging to opposing parties were able to set aside their differences, and publish their works next to each other.

With his Revistas literarias de México (1868-83), Altamirano inaugurated a new chapter in the historiography of Mexican literature. The Revistas literarias de México are a chronological account of Mexico's literary production since the time of political independence, till 1883 (last year of publication of the "revistas"). There had been some earlier attempts to record the history of Mexican literature, but they had merely consisted of the biography and works of the most relevant authors. The Revistas literarias de México, on the other hand, included a much more critical analysis of the evolution of the Mexican novel starting with Lizardi's El periquillo sarniento. For the first time there was a publication offering the Mexican public a good historical overview of the beginnings of the Mexican novel, and praising those who, like Lizardi, had dared to deviate from the paths dictated by the European tradition (Brushwood, Mexico in Its Novel 94).

Altamirano's comments, however, are sometimes too benevolent and too subjective to be of true critical value, especially when it came to the works of other liberals. Altamirano thought that his fellow writers needed encouragement, guidance, and protection, instead of harsh criticism. As a critic, Altamirano paid attention first to the writers' moral purpose and spiritual commitment ignoring other equally important facets of their writing. He felt that the function of literature was to ensure the preservation of the moral values of the community, as well as to spread a love for one's mother-country. When it came to evaluate the work of writers from opposing political factions, Altamirano treated their work in a rather superficial fashion.

German Literature

Altamirano's first contacts with German culture can probably be traced back to the lessons of his teacher Ignacio Ramírez at the "Instituto Literario de Toluca". In the speech he delivered at Ramírez's funeral in 1879, Altamirano stated that it had been Ramírez who had not only introduced the modern German philosophers to Mexico, but who had also opened the doors to new ways of studying literature: "[Ramírez] impulsó los estudios sobre la geología y la geografía y la lingüística de México, enseñó el primero los métodos de la filosofía alemana, hizo conocer a Hegel, a Molleschott y a Spencer, y abrió nuevos caminos a la literatura" (qtd. in Bopp, Contribución al estudio de las letras alemanas en México 144). Altamirano's interest for Germany had also been fueled by the admiration he felt for men like Alexander von Humboldt and Oloardo Hassey.

In the prologue he wrote for Pedro Castera's Las minas y los mineros in 1882, Altamirano made the following reference to Humboldt: "El barón de Humboldt, fué el primero que reveló a la Europa civilizada las miserias y las grandezas de nuestra vida minera, porque pudo contemplarlas con ojo experimentado" (qtd. in Altamirano, La literatura nacional III: 134). And in the same year, he wrote in his introduction to Luis Malanco's Viaje a Oriente: "El barón de Humboldt no reveló a México de otra manera que con esas encantadoras descripciones que ponen en relieve no sólo al sabio, sino al literato amigo de Schiller y de Wieland" (III: 115). Along with his fellow countrymen, Altamirano felt a tremendous gratitude for Humboldt's role in presenting a favorable picture of Mexico in Europe. Altamirano's description of Humboldt as "el revelador de nuestra patria en Europa" (II: 83) illustrates the perception most Mexicans had of Humboldt as one of the principal mediating figures between Latin America and Europe.

Altamirano always regretted the fact that he had been born too late to have a chance to meet Alexander von Humboldt in person. He therefore considered himself very lucky to have known Oloardo Hassey. It is almost certain that Altamirano studied German under the guidance of Hassey. Unfortunately, it is not known when, or for how long, he was his student. In an article published in El renacimiento on January 23, 1869, Altamirano praised Hassey's efforts to promote the learning of German in Mexico, and expressed his regrets that the German language was still not as popular among his fellow countrymen as the French language:

> [...] hay en México un sabio y modesto profesor, el Sr. D. Oloardo Hassey, que hace años está consagrado en el país á la enseñanza de esta lengua, y que ha compuesto métodos y estudios que han aprovechado en gran manera á la juventud. Pero este profesor, empeñoso y honrado, tiene pocos discípulos, y es preciso que se le rodee de muchos, para bien de México.

(qtd. in Bopp, Contribución al estudio de las letras alemanas en México 252)

Altamirano was convinced that the time had come to give preference to the study of German over that of French. Germany had, after all, become the leading voice in both the sciences and the humanities. He expressed this in the same article:

> Nos permitimos preguntar: ¿por qué no se protege más el estudio de este riquísimo e importante idioma? Antes se creía que el francés era la clave de las ciencias; ahora es preciso estudiar el alemán si se quiere *saber*. Los franceses traducen; los alemanes piensan y crean. Las ciencias naturales, la literatura, la crítica, hoy están resplandeciendo en Alemania. Sus universidades son los faros de la ciencia, sus libros son rayos de luz, sus sabios son hoy los maestros en todo. Y ¿así descuidamos el estudio del alemán, cuando al contrario, debía enseñarse este idioma de preferencia á los demás extranjeros que se hablan hoy?
>
> (qtd. in Bopp 44)

According to Marianne O. de Bopp, Altamirano continuously encouraged others not only to study the German language, but also to translate German works into Spanish. In his Revistas literarias de México (1868), Altamirano expressed his growing distrust of French translations from German: "[...] y desconfiando de las traducciones francesas que, como se sabe, *no brillan por su exactitud* [my italics], no podemos hacer por hoy otra cosa que consagrarnos con tenacidad y con empeño al estudio del idioma alemán" (qtd. in La literatura nacional I: 162). He himself, apparently, translated little, leaving the job to those whose command of German he trusted more than his own.[26]

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[26] Altamirano's decision to stay away from translation had probably more to do with a lack of confidence than with a lack of skill. An excerpt of a poem by Theodor Körner published in El siglo XIX on September 19th, 1870 is a good indication of the extent of Altamirano's command of German. The lines are not translated word for word—something that is almost impossible to do with a poem anyway—, and there are a few changes in the verb tenses and in the personal pronouns (i.e. "Doch unlöschbar lodert" should read "pero arde inextinguible", instead of "pero que arda inextinguible"; and "will [...] Euch umspannen" should read "quiere cobijaros", instead of "quiere cobijarnos"). Overall, however, the translation offers a good rendering of the original poem:

Verlöscht Ihr Lichter! Doch unlöschbar lodert
In deutschen Herzen der Begeistrung Flamme
Noch steht die deutsche Eiche unvermodert
und neues Leben quillt im alten Stamme.

But he often praised efforts of people like Sebastián Segura and Rafael de Zayas Enríquez, and encouraged them to continue their valuable work:

> Zayas ha residido en [...] Alemania; mucho tiempo se ha consagrado con asiduidad y con gusto al cultivo de esa rica y hermosa lengua, y de esa grandiosa y profunda literatura, [...] Entretanto, lo excitamos ya que él posee afortunadamente un conocimiento que falta aquí, como es el idioma alemán, a que haga estudios sobre los grandes escritores alemanes, traducciones de aquellas obras maestras que apenas conocemos, con lo cual prestará un servicio inmenso a la literatura mexicana, porque se enriquecerá con nuevos monumentos.
>
> (qtd. in La literatura nacional I: 161)

The study of German became more and more popular during those years. Even though its popularity never reached the level of that of French, there was a definite increase in the number of students participating in German language classes, as well as in the institutions offering them. Direct translations of German works also became easier to come by due to an increased awareness of the dangers inherent in second and third-hand translations, and also because of a broader interest in German literature in general. The most prominent literary clubs and associations of the time (including the "Liceo Hidalgo" and the "Linterna Mágica", and the famous soirées—or "veladas literarias"—held weekly at Altamirano's private residence) placed a greater emphasis on German

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Ja -- frisch belaubt steht sie in neuem Glanze
Und will mit Friedenschatten Euch umspanen.
Auf denn! Zum Wettkampf nach dem Eichenkranze
Zum letzten Kampfe gegen den Tyrannen.

"¡Apáguense las luces! pero que arda inextinguible la llama del entusiasmo en el corazón alemán! Todavía se halla en pie e incorrupto la sagrada encina de la Germania. Sí: se halla en pie, reverdece, se abrillanta de nuevo y quiere cobijarnos con la sombra de la paz! Arriba pues ...! ¿Al combate heroico para ganar la corona de encino... Sostened la postrera lucha contra el tirano!" (qtd. in Bopp 148)

Bopp also suggests that many of Altamirano's translations might have been published without reference to his name (a common practice in those days), making it thus almost impossible for the modern critic to establish the true extent of Altamirano's contributions as a translator.

literature than ever before, and also welcomed more German members into their ranks, many of whom became personal friends of Altamirano.

Apart from his love for German literature, and the admiration he had for men like Alexander von Humboldt and Oloardo Hassey, the strong affinity that Altamirano felt for Germany was also a result of his political convictions. Altamirano endorsed any country or political movement whose ideals of liberty and sovereignty were congruent with his own. Such had been the case with Germany. Altamirano praised Bismarck for the determination he had shown after Napoleon III had declared war against Germany in 1870 in the attempt to stop the foundation of the Prussian empire. The French-German war ended in 1871 with the coronation of Wilhelm I as emperor of the new German empire. The unified fighting spirit of the various German nations under the lead of Bismarck had proven to be the key element in warding off the expansionist politics of Napoleon III, and ultimately in preserving Germany's political and cultural autonomy. The discord between Mexico's conservative and liberal forces, on the other hand, had led the conservatives to go as far as to advocate the imposition of a foreign emperor on their own land. Altamirano admired the strong sense of patriotism and liberty that the German people had exhibited in the face of adversity—the Mexican experiences with the French had made Altamirano very lucid about Napoleon III's ambition, but quite blind to Bismarck's own imperial policies. Many of Altamirano's political articles published at the time reflect his views about the conflict between Germany and France. Most of the articles that appeared in 1870 and 1871, including the following excerpt from El siglo XIX, revolved round the concepts of patriotism and liberty:

> [...] en Alemania antes que el principio monárquico está la patria, la gran patria germánica, a cuyas banderas no se eleva el blasón de una dinastía, sino la libertad, la autonomía de un gran grupo de pueblos que tienen un mismo origen, tradiciones de familia comunes, aspiraciones iguales y que están estrechamente

> enlazados por los vínculos de una federación sagrada. (emphasis added)
>
> (qtd. in Bopp 147)

Altamirano showed his one-sided support for Germany at a time when this country was not held in favor by many of his contemporaries. The presence of Maximilian in Mexico, the 1870-71 French-German war, along with the francophile tendencies of Benito Juárez and Porfirio Díaz, had given rise to a negative attitude towards anything connected with Germany. The fact that most of the political articles which were available in Mexico at the time came directly from France, only worsened the situation. Any person who dared to defend Germany in public was subject to harsh criticism. Altamirano was no exception. Previously celebrated literary masterpieces were all of a sudden considered worthless. In a few years, the image of Germany changed drastically from the idyllic country of castles and fair women to that of a ruthless military power. The Mexican press played a major role in the dissemination of these ideas. An article in El correo germánico (1876) attests to the gravity of the situation:

> Hubo un tiempo, no muy lejano todavía, en que nos figurábamos a Alemania asilo de las virtudes patriarcales, tierra clásica del idilio. [...] La "bonhomie" alemana era proverbial. Pero desde hace unos cuantos años, todo ha cambiado: la palabra Alemania, en vez de evocar la idea de la poesía campestre y de presentar a nuestra imaginación cuadros apacibles y dulces imágenes, sólo sugiere discusiones, anexiones, regimientos de "landwher" [sic]. El Príncipe de Bismarck ha perjudicado notablemente a Herman [sic] y Dorothea.
>
> (qtd. in Bopp 387)

The perception of Germany as a predominantly militarist power (Bopp 375) became even stronger after the death of Altamirano. Interestingly, the commercial ties between the two countries did not suffer during this ordeal. Germany remained Mexico's principal trade partner during most of the second half of the 19th century.

The fact that Altamirano's love and respect for Germany and for its literature remained unchanged in the face of all the negative propaganda is quite commendable. His belief that the advanced state of Germany's civilization was based on the principles of reason, liberty and humanity, continued to fuel his desire to learn as much as possible about this country, and about its literature, so that he could encourage his own countrymen to fight for the same kind of political and intellectual independence. Altamirano's political convictions, together with his artistic expectations, also played a decisive role in the selection of the particular German works he would read and recommend to others. His strong affiliation to liberalism, for example, caused him to identify from very early on with the works of the German poet and dramatist Friedrich Schiller. Schiller was introduced in Mexico in the early 1830's through French translations. The side of Schiller that the Mexican public got to know at first was that of the "Sturm und Drang" poet. His classical side was discovered only decades later. Altamirano admired Schiller's poetry not only because it expressed a deep love for nature, but also because it portrayed nature in a realistic fashion. And he liked Schiller's dramas because they reflected a deep concern for humanitarian and moral issues.

Altamirano was convinced that Mexico's newly emerging poets would profit from reading Schiller's poetic treatise Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung (1795). Comments about this essay can be found in two of Altamirano's best known articles: "Carta a una poetisa" and "De la poesía épica y de la poesía lírica en 1870" (both first published in El federalista in 1871). Both articles are very similar in terms of what they say about Schiller, and about the relationship between poetry and nature. The first essay recommends the reading of Schiller's work: "El poeta debe ser el intérprete y el guardián de la naturaleza, dice Schiller, cuyo *Ensayo sobre la poesía sentimental*, recomiendo a usted" (Obras literarias completas 672). The second essay is of particular interest because it emphasizes Schiller's idea that only in nature can the poetic genius find its true source of nurture and strength (Nacci 92):

> [...] rogaré a la juventud que medite estas palabras del gran poeta Schiller en su profundo estudio sobre la *Poesía sentimental*. "Hoy la naturaleza—dice—es la sola llama en que se nutre el genio poético, es de ella sola de quien deriva toda su fuerza, es ella sola a quien habla aún en el hombre facticio y en el seno de la civilización".
>
> (Obras literarias completas 625)

Schiller's dramas became very popular as a result of the French invasion. Known as "the poet of liberty" among Mexico's liberal intellectuals, Schiller was held in high regard because many of his heroes were driven in their actions and speech by the ideal of liberty (Bopp, Contribución al estudio de las letras alemanas en México 109). Don Carlos (1787), for example, dealt with the subject of liberty on an individual basis, while Wilhelm Tell (1804) portrayed the courageous fight for independence of an entire nation. Wilhelm Tell (1804) was Altamirano's favorite drama by Schiller because it embodied everything that Altamirano had ever dreamt of when he postulated his theories about Mexico's national literature. One of Altamirano's most highly acclaimed critical articles "Guillermo Tell (Schiller)" (published in La libertad on April 14, 1883) is dedicated entirely to this drama. Altamirano praised the virtuous, humane and down to earth portrayal of the main character; the historically accurate depiction of landscape, people, customs, and events; and, in particular, the exemplary representation of the theme of liberty:

> En [la historia de Guillermo Tell] no hay hazañas gigantescas como en los romances del Cid [...], no hay más que virtud agreste y sencilla, amor ardiente a la libertad e instinto de legítima defensa, todo muy humano y muy real.
>
> [...]

> Este drama está dictado por la conciencia y escrito por el corazón. Todo en él es virtud, grandeza, civismo, entusiasmo noble y amor a la humanidad.
>
> [...]
>
> Así pues, el hermoso drama de Schiller no sólo es una obra maestra literaria, sino que es una reconstrucción poética de la leyenda y una teoría fundamental. [...] Mientras que exista la fe de la Suiza libre, y mientras exista la verdad de la belleza eterna, Guillermo Tell será el tipo de los héroes de la libertad. (emphasis added)
>
> (qtd. in Bopp 406, 408, 411)

Even readers of German origin regarded Altamirano's article as one of the most exemplary interpretations of Wilhelm Tell they had ever read. The German newspaper Germania (which was published for a short time in both Spanish and German) printed the following review in one of its 1892 issues:

> [...] un artículo lleno de ingenio del Dr. Ignacio Altamirano [... sobre el] drama que gusta extremadamente a los mexicanos republicanos; la comprensión de las ideas de Schiller, la interpretación y los comentarios sobre las mismas deberían tener a veces un efecto verdaderamente sorprendente sobre algunos del gremio de nuestros señores eruditos que creen deber conservar esta interpretación como su privilegio.
>
> (qtd. in Bopp 109)

Altamirano's opinion of Goethe, on the other hand, was not as clear-cut as his view about Schiller. While Altamirano had nothing but praise for Schiller, regardless of genre or subject matter, the situation was quite different when it came to Goethe. Altamirano seems to have been very fond of Goethe's classical poetry; his feelings about Goethe's novels and dramas, on the other hand, vary from work to work and from article to article. In his article "Aspecto de Jalapa", for example, Altamirano refers to Goethe as "el gran poeta filósofo" and "el más prodigioso inventor de perspectivas"

(Obras literarias completas 858). His impressions on Faust I are positive in some instances and negative in others. The essay "La Semana Santa en mi pueblo" ends with a neutral reference to Goethe's character Faust: "Estoy fatigado, es muy tarde; y puesto de codos en mi mesa, contemplo mi lámpara y vienen a mis labios las palabras del doctor Fausto: —*"Mi lámpara se extingue"* (Obras literarias completas 875). His prologue to José Rivera y Río's novel Flores del destierro (1868), on the other hand, contains a less favorable remark about "la risa fría y triste del autor de *Fausto* " (698).

Altamirano's worst criticism, however, was directed towards Goethe's novel Die Leiden des jungen Werthers (1774). Although he acknowledged that Goethe had inaugurated a new trend in fiction with the publication of both this novel and Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre (1795-96)—just as he had founded a new trend in poetry with Faust (Part I, 1808; Part II, 1832)—,[27] he openly condemned the catastrophic impact of the story of the young man's suicide on a large number of young readers: "El *Werther* de Goethe extravió muchas almas" (qtd. in La literatura nacional I: 38).[28] Along the same lines he warned against the novels of George Sand, and other similar love stories in which the amatory theme does not serve any "edifying" purpose, but is presented in a rather licentious fashion: "En el cuento de amores el ingenio puede hacer lo que quiera; y ya que lo puede todo, ¿por qué no reunir el encanto a la moral? Las luchas del corazón no necesitan del vicio para ser interesantes" (I:38). In the "Carta-prólogo a los 'Romances líricos, elegías y romances de amor' de Milk" (1888), Altamirano admits, though, that it is normal for almost every poet—not excluding himself—to go through a phase of profound yearning and melancholy during the early stages of his or her career, similar to that experienced by Goethe's protagonist:

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[27] "El autor de *Werther* y de *Wilhelm Meister* fundó, por decirlo así, una escuela novelesca, así como fundó con el *Fausto* una escuela poética. Eran los primeros vagidos del romanticismo moderno." (qtd. in La literatura nacional I:28; originally published in Revistas literarias de México (1821-1867) (Mexico, 1868)).

[28] Ignacio M. Altamirano, Revistas literarias de México (1821-1867) (Mexico, 1868).

> Todo esto forma la primera erupción poética de un alma juvenil. ¡Ilusiones, amor y desencanto, anhelo de una vida mejor; la tristeza del mundo, el mal de la vida! ... todos comenzamos por ser como Werther. [...] Después viene la edad madura; con ella la impaciencia se aplaca; los ojos, ya no empeñados por la ilusión ni nublados por las lágrimas, ven mejor; se llega a la cumbre y desde allí, el panorama es otro; [...]
>
> (qtd. in La literatura nacional III: 252)

Contrary to the ambivalent feelings which he harbored for Goethe, Altamirano seems to have had nothing but praise for Heinrich Heine and E.T.A. Hoffmann. Altamirano pays tribute to Heine in both "Carta a una poetisa" (1871), and in the prologue to the 1886 edition of Eduardo del Valle's epic poem "Cuauhtémoc". Apparently, Heine had won Altamirano's esteem thanks to one of his poems in which he pays homage not only to the uncorrupted beauty and vigor of pre-Columbian America, but in which he also describes the torturing of Cuauhtémoc under the hands of Cortés, and the subsequent pillage of the golden treasures of the Aztec empire, as the despicable act of an outlaw. The poem is entitled "Vitzliputzli" (Heine's German version of the Aztec name *Huitzilopochtli*), and is contained in the collection Romanzero. Altamirano reproduced the following lines of "Vitzliputzli" in Spanish in the prologue to Eduardo Valle's "Cuauhtémoc":

> Cuando se considera esta conducta de una vileza repugnante, se comprende la justicia con que el gran poeta Enrique Heine califica a Hernán Cortés, cuando dice:
>
> "En su cabeza llevaba el laurel, y en sus botas brillaban espuelas de oro. Y sin embargo, no era un héroe, ni era tampoco un caballero.
>
> "No era más que un capitán de bandoleros, que con su insolente mano escribió en el libro de la fama su nombre insolente: ¡Cortés!"
>
> (La literatura nacional III:240) [29]

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[29] The original poem (Part I: stanzas 1-2) reads as follows:

With regard to E.T.A. Hoffmann, it appears that he was one of Altamirano's favorite foreign authors. As will be seen in the following chapter, Altamirano made extensive use of elements from Hoffmann's tales in his own works of narrative fiction. Hoffmann's influence can be perceived on a variety of levels including characterization, choice of locale, description, focalization, and narrative structure. Oddly enough, Altamirano seemed more impressed by the depth of sentiment expressed in Hoffmann's narrative than by his use of fantastic elements. Altamirano's comments about Hoffmann and the configuration of his own works of fiction suggest that he placed a bigger weight on narrative structure, on historical and geographical accuracy, on characterization, and on the capacity to invoke a particular set of emotions in the reader, than on any other aspect of Hoffmann's work. The following paragraph in the Revistas literarias de México certainly reinforces this notion:

> Una nueva escuela, alemana por cierto, ha añadido todavía a la forma romanesca un atractivo más: lo fantástico; lo fantástico a que son tan inclinados [sic] las imaginaciones del norte. Pero lo fantástico de cierta especie, no lo fantástico de los pueblos primitivos que es común a todos los países y que ha nacido del terror religioso y de la ignorancia, sino de lo fantástico ideal, si podemos expresarnos así. Hoffman [sic] es el padre de esta escuela, que se ha seguido en Francia y en que se han hecho débiles ensayos en España. Los cuentos de Hoffman [sic] han adquirido gran celebridad, y nosotros no lo admiramos tanto por su originalidad, como por su exquisito sentimiento.
>
> (qtd. in La literatura nacional I:38-39)

Auf dem Haupt trug er den Lorbeer, / Und an seinen Stiefeln glänzten / Goldne Sporen - dennoch war er / Nicht ein Held und auch kein Ritter.

Nur ein Räuberhauptmann war er, / Der in's Buch des Ruhmes einschrieb, / Mit der eignen frechen Faust, / Seinen frechen Namen: Cortez.

(Heine, "Vitzliputzli" I:1-8)

Altamirano's works also include references to other novelists, poets, and thinkers of German origin apart from the ones just mentioned. Some of these are writers and thinkers of the stature of Luther, Lessing, Klopstock, Wieland, and Schopenhauer, while others are figures who were well known in Altamirano's days, but whose names are rarely mentioned today. Such is the case of the poets Salomon Geßner, Marie Binder, and Georg Friedrich Daumer, and particularly of the Swiss author Heinrich Zschokke whose ideology is reflected quite heavily (more to this in chapter 3) in Altamirano's work. Attention has been concentrated here on Goethe, Schiller, Heine and Hoffmann, however, not only because they are prominent figures of Germany's literary past, but also because Altamirano was particularly fond of their work.

The Novelist

The following section will introduce Altamirano, the novelist. Critics like Brushwood, Alegría, Martínez, and others, have declared Ignacio Manuel Altamirano as Mexico's first true novelist: "He understood what a novel should be and his approach to the writing of fiction was a literary one" (Brushwood, The Romantic Novel in Mexico 36). Alegría states that Altamirano was: "[el] primer escritor hispanoamericano que ensaya una concepción moderna de la novela", and that he had "[una] conciencia clara de los problemas que afrontó la novela mexicana en su período de formación" (58). There is no doubt that Altamirano had a broader understanding of the novel than any of the other Mexican writers of his time, and that he also had a clear idea of the shortcomings of the 19th century Mexican novel. One of these deficiencies—the use of foreign themes and locales—was already discussed in chapter 1.

Another problem consisted in the inaccessibility of many Mexican novels for a large proportion of the Mexican public simply because of their elevated language and complicated form. Many of the novels produced at the time were accessible only to those readers who had been fortunate enough to receive a fairly advanced education. Altamirano, on the other hand, was aware that many Mexican readers were not as sophisticated in their reading interests, nor did they have the same expectations from a literary work as their German, French, or English counterparts. A large proportion of Mexico's population was still illiterate or semi-illiterate (including the middle classes), but changes in the public education system were being introduced with the objective to correct this problem. These changes were, to a great extent, promoted by Altamirano himself. Altamirano advocated the production of literary works which were simpler in style and language, and which could thus have the potential of eventually attracting a larger number of readers.

Altamirano reminded his colleagues that since Mexico's novelistic tradition was just in the making, there would be plenty of opportunities in the future to develop a more elaborate style: "Nuestra novela comienza; démosle, pues, la forma más adaptable por ahora a nuestra instrucción. Después vendrá la época de mejorarla" (qtd. in Warner 51). He also exhorted the novelists to reserve the use of elevated language and complex structure to those works of non-fiction which are usually oriented to more specialized audiences: "Dejemos el tecnicismo y la elevación hasta perderse en las nubes, para el escrito científico, para la historia filosófica, para los círculos superiores de la sociedad, y adoptemos para la leyenda romanesca la manera de decir elegante, pero sencilla, poética, deslumbradora, si se necesita; pero fácil de comprenderse por todos, [...] " (qtd. in Warner 50-51).

Altamirano's own novels are a good example of the kind of style and language he wanted to see reflected in Mexico's narrative. His novels are constructed using the same simple, direct, forward-moving style that he always used in his articles and essays. Nacci explains: "[Altamirano] did not challenge his readers to understand him. He wrote so that they understood him immediately and without effort. The importance of his writing was *what* [my italics] he had to say. The 'how' to say it was made to serve the 'what'" (61). This does not mean, however, that Altamirano was not aware that form and style were just as important as the content. Thanks to Altamirano's recommendations, and to the way he applied them to his own works, many other Mexican writers began to pay attention to form, and to consciously trying to improve it. The extreme sentimentalism, incoherence, and long digressions that had been prevalent in Mexico's romantic novel up to that time, began to recede, making space for a more sober type of narrative, and also paving the way for the advent of new literary movements such as realism, modernism, and the novel of the late 20th century.

Besides the formal aspects, Altamirano always maintained that the most important characteristic of the Latin American novel was that it inform the readers about the history of Latin America, and the customs of its people, and that it teach them to love and to respect their own native countries. As was mentioned earlier, the novel should basically serve as a tool for social and moral indoctrination: "[Altamirano] pide a los narradores que [...] utilicen el género como un artificio para hacer descender a la masa doctrinas y opiniones, dejando los estúpidos cuentos ociosos. Tras la fantasía debía estar la historia, la moral, la política, el análisis social; nivelar las clases, educar las costumbres, buscar la mejora de la humanidad, a ejemplo de Voltaire y Rousseau [...]" (Batis 89). Altamirano applied the same principle to his own novels: "Ignacio Manuel Altamirano construye sus novelas como las de 'tésis', enfrentando ideologías y comportamientos sociales (que personifica en los distintos personajes), cuyo resultado final moralizador o ejemplarizante viene dado por el triunfo de aquellos que están al servicio de su ideología" (Gálvez 102). Altamirano condemned any work that was written in bad taste, or which did not conform to his particular ideas about morality and decorum.

Like his fellow writers, Altamirano engaged in the writing of historical novels, and most of his novels contain an interpretation of history in accordance with his liberal convictions. Altamirano's novels are build around true historical events and centered on an amatory plot whose outcome is determined by the author's wish to impart a moral lesson. Critics like Warner, Rodríguez, and Azuela agree that Altamirano's desire to provide the genre with a didactic mission, came at a cost: the artistic value of the narrative, the credibility of the stories, and the authenticity of the characters were all negatively affected in one way or another. The renowned writer Mariano Azuela explains: "Ciertas ideas preconcebidas acerca del papel que la novela debe desempeñar en la educación del pueblo, obligan al autor a torcer y retorcer la verdad, a deformar los acontecimientos, las cosas, los personajes, encaminándolo todo de acuerdo con una idea fija" (497).

In general, Altamirano tried to put into practice in his own novels the theories he had developed in his critical writings. The most valuable aspect of his novels are their well-organized structure, their correct and simple style, and the charming flavour of their descriptions (especially those depicting rural or small-town settings). The historical accounts and the geographic descriptions have an undeniable Mexican flavor. On that score, Carballo points out that: "[Altamirano] traza el paisaje no como telón de fondo sino como elemento vivo de la obra" (63). Altamirano's weak spots lie in the areas of plot and characterization. Since the stories and the characters were designed to fit the romantic spirit, they are not always very credible. The stories are usually well constructed, but they are not as fully developed as they could be. And the characters often exhibit qualities which are rather universal instead of exclusively Mexican.

According to Mariano Azuela, Altamirano was a good *writer*, but not a very good *novelist*. Other critics seem to agree. The controversy surrounding this matter arose over the need to try to explain why most of Altamirano's novels are rather short in length (at a time when most of the novels on the market were quite voluminous). This problem has made it almost impossible for the critics to agree on whether Altamirano's works should be classified as novels, novellas, or tales. Johnson, for example, thinks that they are novelettes rather than fully-fledged novels. He attributes Altamirano's inability to develop or sustain long plots to a "lack of genius" (13). Brushwood also concludes that Altamirano was not blessed with great inspiration or imagination (Mexico in Its Novel 95), but admits at the same time that Altamirano's sense of proportion and reality, together with his good taste, spared him from writing the long-winded, over-indulgent romantic novels that many of his contemporaries wrote.

On the other hand, there are critics like Warner who prefer to classify Altamirano's works as novels, and who believe that Altamirano chose a simpler and more direct style with the explicit purpose of moving away from the long and often incoherent novels of the past. José Luis Martínez reminds the reader that Altamirano was after all the first to consciously promote the qualities of moderation and balance: "[...] cuando todos pensaban que la eficacia de una novela residía en la abundancia y en la truculencia de los hechos que contaba, [Altamirano] tuvo el acierto de mostrar la virtud de la sobriedad y del equilibrio" (Obras completas.Ignacio Manuel Altamirano 8). And Johnson agrees that Altamirano's narrative simply reflects a life-long commitment to simplicity, good taste, and restraint: "[Altamirano was a] romanticist in temperament but a classicist in expression" (12).

Altamirano's best known novels are Clemencia (first published in 1869 in the form of weekly instalments in El renacimiento), and El Zarco (completed in 1888, published posthumously in 1901). These two are his two longest works of fiction; in fact, these are the only ones that can be classified as novels without any doubt. His other—shorter—pieces of narrative prose are: "Las tres flores" (published first with the title "La novia" in 1867 in El correo de México), "Julia" (appeared first as "Una noche de julio" in 1870 in El siglo XIX), "La navidad en las montañas" (published in serial form in 1871), "Antonia" (first published in 1872 in El domingo under the generic title

Idilios y elegías. Memorias de un imbécil), and "Beatriz" and "Atenea" (which were left unfinished, although in a fairly advanced state of composition). Clemencia, "La navidad en las montañas", "Las tres flores", and "Julia", were published in book form with the collective title of Cuentos de invierno in 1880.

Altamirano's novels were all published at first in the most prominent periodicals of his time. As was explained in Chapter 1, this was the usual way to publish novels in Mexico in the 19th century (as well as in other countries like France, for example). Subsequent editions in book form were published later on, including editions that combine his dozens of essays and articles, relieving those interested in his writings from having to comb through hundreds of issues of the many periodicals in which his works were originally published. A few commemorative editions appeared in Mexico in celebration of the centenary of Altamirano's death in 1993. As far as we know, only two of his works have been translated into English.[30]

* The preceding pages dealt with the most prominent aspects of the life and work of Ignacio Manuel Altamirano. He was a key figure in the establishment of Mexico's literary tradition during the second half of the 19th century. Although he contributed to many different areas of public life, he is best remembered for his efforts to free Mexico's novel from its slavish adherence to foreign models. It was mentioned that Altamirano did not reject European letters, but that instead he encouraged his fellow countrymen to study the masterpieces of Europe's literature in search of ideas on how to create original works of their own. Emulation was his motto, not imitation. Altamirano

encouraged friends and colleagues versed in foreign languages to produce their own translations. He himself apparently translated little. He preferred instead to write critical articles or commentaries about individual foreign works and their authors, and to explore how their principles could be applied to Mexico's own emerging novelistic tradition. While the present chapter concentrated on Altamirano's passion for German literatures as reflected in his *critical writings*, the following chapter will focus on the impact the works of H. Heine, E.T.A. Hoffmann, J. W. Goethe, F. Schiller, and H. Zschokke had on Altamirano's *narrative*.

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[30] Ignacio Manuel Altamirano. Christmas in the Mountains. Trans. Harvey L. Johnson. Gainesville: University of Florida, 1961.
---. El Zarco: The Bandit. Trans. Mary Alt. London: The Folio Society, 1957.

Chapter 3

The previous chapter outlined some of the most relevant opinions Altamirano held regarding Germany's cultural and literary achievements, the advanced state of its sciences and schools of thought, the beauty of its language, as well as general comments about its recent history, its political organization, and its position relative to the other European powers. These references were extracted from Altamirano's vast body of critical works, which include a large number of essays, articles, literary reviews, etc. In his works of non-fiction, Altamirano frequently made reference to authors in whose work he was particularly interested. The two German names that appear most often in Altamirano's non-fiction are those of Friedrich Schiller and Alexander von Humboldt. Altamirano admired Schiller's dramas for their liberal ideals and glorification of freedom, and was eternally grateful to Humboldt for the invaluable service he did to Mexico by disseminating in Europe a positive picture of an until then unknown, or at best misjudged, nation.

Since the previous chapter contemplated only Altamirano's critical writings, the present chapter will focus entirely on his narrative fiction. Altamirano's two full-length novels Clemencia and El Zarco will be analized regarding the presence of German references within their pages. His shorter narrative works will be considered as well. The chapter will be divided in sections, each dealing with a particular work, and will provide basic information about time of publication, plot, characterization, narrative structure, setting, etc. The focus will then shift to the identification and evaluation of the German references included in the texts. The other foreign references (French or English in most cases) will be ignored for the present study. It shall be sufficient here to mention that they exist, but that they—interestingly enough—do not surpass the German references in number or importance, which is again proof of the love and admiration Altamirano felt for Germany. The novels are analyzed in the chronological order in which they were written and/or first published.

Las tres flores

The shortest of all of Altamirano's narrative works, an unusual love story set in the city of Prague, was first published in 1867 in El correo de México with the title "La novia". A second edition was published in El renacimiento two years later with the new title of "Las tres flores", and with the added subtitle of "Cuento alemán" ("German Tale"). A third revised and augmented version was published in volume one of the collection Cuentos de invierno in 1880, with the same title "Las tres flores" but a different subtitle ("Cuento bohemio"). All three editions include the following note in brackets on their last page: "(Traducido por Ignacio M. Altamirano)". Altamirano claimed all his life that Las tres flores was a translation he had made during his early years as a student. In the preface to the first edition of Cuentos de invierno (1880) Altamirano states this himself:

> Las novelillas que contiene este volumen han tenido fortuna; *Habent sua fata libelli* . La primera, que es una traducción que hice cuando era estudiante, no fue publicada sino hasta 1867 en *El Correo de México*, con el título de *La novia* ; después reproducida en *El Renacimiento* con el nombre que lleva aquí, *Las tres flores*, y luego ha dado la vuelta a la república impresa de nuevo, ya en los folletines, ya en las columnas de varios periódicos, que muchas veces se olvidaron de poner el nombre del traductor y de indicar el origen de la novela.

(Altamirano, Obras completas III, 23)

Altamirano never revealed any information about the original source. This has caused some to believe that Altamirano composed the story himself, and that he just wanted to detract the attention of the critics from the fact that as a purely sentimental love story Las tres flores is a rather atypical work for an author whose works were usually committed to reflect the social, political and historical reality of his native country. The second possibility is that Altamirano might not have wanted to be identified with a story that included a suicide after he had openly condemned Goethe's Die Leiden des jungen Werther for this very reason.[31]

Despite the debate about whether Altamirano was the original author of Las tres flores or not, nobody seems to have attempted to identify the possible source. Even scholars of the stature of Marianne Bopp have not come up with any conclusive evidence in one direction or another. Although she took at face value Altamirano's claims, she made no attempt to identify the original source. All she said about Las tres flores in her famous study Contribución al estudio de las letras alemanas en México was the following:

> Estos cuentos son todos lacrimosos, lamentables, y tratan de amantes que sólo en la tumba se reúnen, que sollozan en los cementerios y mueren por un amor infeliz. Vienen por el camino de Inglaterra, España o también de Francia [...]; algunos hasta son de origen alemán [...]. Y México adopta esta moda, como comprueba Ignacio M. Altamirano (*El Renacimiento*, 1869) con su traducción del "Cuento alemán: *Las tres flores* " (a veces también "cuento bohemio" en una

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[31] As the reader will remember from chapter 2, Altamirano's opinion about Goethe's novel was not too favourable:

> [...] la Alemania se conmovía con la aparición de las novelas de Goethe, novelas en que el sentimiento se llevaba a un grado de exaltación que podía producir el extravío. [...] El *Werther* de Goethe extravió muchas almas; [...] En el cuento de amores el ingenio puede hacer lo que quiera; y ya que lo puede todo, ¿por qué no reunir el encanto a la moral? Las luchas del corazón no necesitan del vicio para ser interesantes.
>
> (La literatura nacional I,28-38)

It is important to point out that Altamirano was referring only to some of Goethe's novels, the Werther in particular. He sincerely admired, on the other hand, Goethe's poetry, as well as certain aspects of his dramas.

> u otra reimpresión), donde Lisbeth y su amado se despiden en los grandes bosques de Ehrenfels… y mueren lamentablemente. (118-19)

John Brushwood, on the other hand, seems to support the idea that Las tres flores was Altamirano's personal creation. He doesn't appear to be particularly convinced however: "*Las tres flores* (1867) was published as a translation by Altamirano, but is apparently his own work" (The Romantic Novel in Mexico 38). And like Bopp, José Luis Martínez thought that Altamirano had only been the translator, but did not offer any suggestion as to who the original author might have been: "Pero aunque no haya sido posible, hasta ahora, precisar el autor original del cuento, creo que Altamirano fue sólo su traductor […]" ("Altamirano novelista" 10).

To continue to believe today that Las tres flores is a word for word translation of a work whose real identity has not been possible to uncover seems quite unrealistic in view of the resources available to the modern day literary scholar for such purposes. This is especially true when we keep in mind that Altamirano had had access only to a limited selection of foreign works. The hypothesis that Las tres flores is solely indebted to Altamirano is not entirely satisfactory, since the plot, setting, style, and even length of the work deviate quite significantly from all his other compositions, especially from the earlier ones. If that were the case he would also have had no reason to claim that he was not the original author. Discounting all other possibilities, the most logical answer to this mystery would be that the story as we know it was probably an imitation or paraphrase of another work.

Las tres flores tells the tragic love story of a young couple, Lisbeth and Ludwig, whose hopes for a future together are shattered when her father forces Lisbeth to marry another man. During their tearful farewell the night before the wedding, Lisbeth asks Ludwig to attend the ceremony in order to silence the tongues that have been gossiping about them. Resisting at first, Ludwig finally agrees to come, provided that she grants him the first waltz. Later that night, being unable to sleep, Lisbeth believes to hear a deep sigh very close to her. It could not have been the wind since it is a perfectly still night. The next morning, Lisbeth's fiancé discovers that the wedding bouquet he had personally picked has been mysteriously replaced by three meager flowers: "[...] una *primavera*, una *verónica azul* y una *inmortal*. En ese dulce lenguaje de las flores, que no tiene por palabras sino los colores y los perfumes, la primavera es la esperanza, la verónica es la fidelidad y la inmortal es la constancia" (Altamirano, Obras literarias completas 492). They are symbols of hope, fidelity and loyalty. For lack of a better bouquet, Lisbeth decides to adorn her wedding dress with these flowers. But as the story unfolds, the flowers mysteriously vanish one by one.

More inexplicable events occur throughout the text. During the church ceremony and at the banquet afterwards, Lisbeth's eyes are constantly drawn to the lone figure of a man dressed in black. Nobody else, though, seems to be aware of him. As the stranger approaches her after midnight, she recognizes Ludwig. Grateful for his presence, she accepts his invitation to waltz. All the other guests, however, stop dancing as they see her glide across the dance floor by herself as if guided by an invisible hand. After she returns to her seat, Enrique asks her why she was dancing alone. Surprised, she replies that she was dancing with Ludwig. Horrified, Enrique reveals to her that Ludwig's dead body was found shortly after midnight the day before. At hearing the news, Lisbeth faints and dies in her husband's arms.

None of Altamirano's other narrative works display such a vast array of supernatural elements. In contrast to most of his works, Las tres flores does not contain any historical elements, nor does it deal with any social or political issues. The story is set in Prague, a place far removed from Altamirano's characteristic Mexican settings. Las tres flores is without doubt Altamirano's most romantic work. In conjunction with the other factors mentioned earlier, it seems more and more likely that Altamirano did in fact rely heavily on external sources when he wrote Las tres flores. Thanks to an enlightening suggestion made by Prof. Dimic, there appears to be enough evidence to support the hypothesis that Altamirano used Heinrich Heine's ballad "Die Romanze vom Rodrigo" as chief source of inspiration.

"Die Romanze vom Rodrigo" was first published in February of 1817 in the collection Junge Leiden (1817-21). It is a long narrative poem of forty stanzas, each consisting of four verses. Written in dialogue form and interspersed with descriptions of the setting, the plot is essentially the same as that of Las tres flores. While Heine chose to give Spanish names to his two protagonists and to set the action in the Spanish city of Toledo, Altamirano opted for a German setting and German names. Both Heine's and Altamirano's works begin *in medias res* during the last conversation between Klara and Rodrigo / Lisbeth and Ludwig. Both women are about to wed other men the following day. In both instances it appears that the women have had no say in the selection of their future husbands, but they also seem to be less distressed about their impending marriages than their rejected partners. As they listen to the laments of Rodrigo and Ludwig, the women insist that it was impossible for them to contravene the wishes of their fathers:

> Donna Klara, Donna Klara! / Heißgeliebte langer Jahre, / Hast beschlossen mein Verderben, / Hast's beschlossen ohn' Erbarmen.
>
> Don Rodrigo, Don Rodrigo! / Deine Worte treffen bitter; / Aber Vater drohet strenge, / Nichtig ist der Tochter Wille.

(Heine, "Die Romanze vom Rodrigo" lines 1-4, 13-16)

> —¿Crees, Lisbeth, en los juramentos de amor?
> —Yo creo, Ludwig, en el poder de un padre.

(Altamirano, Obras literarias completas 489)

In several occasions, Altamirano translated certain parts almost word for word, and then enhanced these scenes by adding elements of his own creation:

> Don Rodrigo, Don Rodrigo! / Deine Worte treffen bitter; / […] (lines 13-14)
>
> —Ludwig: tus palabras son duras … / —Lisbeth: las tuyas eran falsas.
> (pg. 489)

In another example, the women implore their spurned lovers to attend their wedding. In both instances the men agree on the condition that the women promise them a dance in return. Again, in the case of Altamirano's work, the exchange between Lisbeth and Ludwig is far more elaborate:

> —Se ha hablado de nosotros mucho; es necesario que vengáis a la boda; ¡estaréis alegre… ; reiréis… ! se verá que ya no me amáis.
> —Para eso… ¡nunca!
> —Lo quiero.
> —No contéis con ello; ¡jamás!
> —Te lo ruego.
> —Me has dicho *tú*…; vendré.
> —Gracias, querido Ludwig.
> —Concédeme una gracia, a tu vez.
> —Habla.
> —Bailarás un vals conmigo.
> —¿Cuál?
> —El primero después de medianoche.
> —Sea.
>
> (Altamirano, Obras literarias completas 490)

In Heine, on the other hand, it takes Klara only one stanza to obtain Rodrigo's answer:

> Don Rodrigo, kühner Ritter, / Sollst nun auch dich selbst besiegen, / Sollst auf meine Hochzeit kommen: / Deine theure Klara bittet! —

> Donna Klara, Donna Klara! / Ja ich schwör' es, ja ich komme, / Will mit dir den Reihen tanzen. / Gute Nacht, ich komme morgen! (ln. 21-28)

The comparison of Heine's ballad with Altamirano's short story reveals that while Altamirano adhered to the basic plot of "Die Romanze vom Rodrigo", he supplemented his work with elements of his own which are not found in Heine's work. Altamirano's most important addition is the incorporation of the flower motif.[32] This aspect is completely missing from Heine's work. The flowers and what they represent are, however, an integral part of Altamirano's work as the title itself suggests. Another addition that Altamirano made was to include a description of the exchange of the marriage vows. During the church ceremony, Lisbeth's attention is constantly drawn to the lone figure of a man dressed in mourning, kneeling not too far from her. Nobody else, though, seems to notice his presence. Having said her vows, Lisbeth realizes that both the man and the primrose, the flower of hope, have disappeared. In the case of Heine's "Die Romanze vom Rodrigo", on the other hand, there is only a brief comment about the newlyweds emerging from the chapel. More attention is given instead to the jubilant crowds lining the streets of Toledo. Another difference between both works in terms of content is that while Lisbeth danced by herself in the belief that she was dancing with Ludwig, Klara never actually left her seat. And, last but not least, Altamirano's work ends with Lisbeth dying in her husband's arms after being notified of Ludwig's gruesome death. Heine's poem, on the other hand, remains open-ended without any indication of how Klara reacted to the news of Rodrigo's death.

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[32] José Luis Martínez points out that flowers were a popular motif in romantic literature. He further believes that the illustrations found in J.J. Grandville's book Les fleurs animées (Paris 1867) might have inspired Altamirano to use similar images for his story Las tres flores. The masterful engravings of Grandville's book had been reproduced individually in the Mexican magazine El álbum mexicano as early as 1849 ("Altamirano novelista" 10).

The most noticeable difference between both works lies in the ambience. Altamirano's version is definitely more romantic and sentimental in tone. The two main characters inspire compassion; they are portrayed as the defenseless victims of an overly paternalistic society. Heine's poem, on the other hand, is written in a cold, distant tone that makes it more difficult for the reader to sympathize with the main characters. The relationship between Lisbeth and Ludwig is depicted as one of love and tender understanding. Rodrigo, on the other hand, exhibits, from the very beginning of the poem, an aggresive, resentful, almost threatening behaviour towards Klara. Rodrigo's grim expression, his cold hands, pale countenance, and morbid conversation as he twirls her around the dance-floor only serve to frighten Klara to the point where she sees herself forced to ask him to leave. Klara also doesn't seem too heartbroken about having to marry someone else. It is therefore almost impossible for the readers to respond in the same way to both sets of characters. Heine's characters lack the basic qualities that would make them lovable and deserving of compassion in the eyes of the readers. Altamirano, on the other hand, portrayed his characters in such a way that the readers would readily identify with their misfortune.

At first sight then it might appear that Altamirano simply reproduced Heine's ballad in a different literary form. The similarities between both plots are, after all, undeniable. The reality is, however, that Altamirano made a number of significant changes when he "translated" the poem. He not only added new scenes, but he also changed the personalities of the main characters, as well as the whole underlying ambience. Choosing a different genre gave Altamirano a definite advantage over Heine—Altamirano could have used verse too, since he was familiar with the writing of poetry. But by using prose, Altamirano avoided having to deal with the constraints that arise from working with a less flexible literary form. He had the advantage of being able to elaborate on individual scenes, as well as to add new scenes altogether. One last question remains, nonetheless: why did Altamirano claim that Las tres flores was a translation? Despite the fact that Altamirano borrowed quite a bit from Heine, he obviously did not reproduce Heine's ballad word for word. Maybe he felt he had to somehow acknowledge the original source since the inspiration for Las tres flores had come almost entirely from "Die Romanze vom Rodrigo". And, unlike his other works, Las tres flores has no foreign references imbedded directly in the text which would identify them as external influences.

Clemencia

Clemencia constitutes Altamirano's longest narrative work. It is probably his second best known full size historical novel after El Zarco. It was first published in instalments in Altamirano's journal El renacimiento (1869), but was also published in book form that same year by the Mexican publishing house "Díaz de León y Santiago White". In 1875-76 it appeared in El Ateneo of New York. In 1880 it was included in the collection Cuentos de Invierno, next to Altamirano's shorter works Julia, La navidad en las montañas, and Las tres flores. Clemencia is considered an important stepping stone in the development of Mexico's novel—Salvador Reyes Nevares claims that Clemencia was the first "artistically conceived" novel written in Mexico (Obras Literarias Completas 3). Altamirano himself, however, seemed to have had a different opinion. In an almost amusing sounding note included at the end of the novel, he apologizes for his long-windedness, and states that far more prominent writers have committed the same error:

> NOTA
>
> El menor de los defectos de esta pobre novelita, es que para cuento parece demasiado larga. Pero no hay que tomar formalmente la ficción de que el doctor relate esto en una noche. Es un artificio literario, como otro cualquiera, pues necesitaba yo que el doctor narrara, como testigo de los hechos, y no creí que debía tener en cuenta el tamaño de la narración. Además, a pesar de mi pequeñez me amparan, para hacer perdonable lo *largo del cuento*, los ejemplos de Víctor Hugo en *Bug-Jargal*, de Dickens en varios de sus *Cuentos de Navidad*, de Erkmann-Chatrian en sus *Cuentos populares*, de Enrique Zschokke en sus *Cuentos Suizos*, y de Hoffmann en muchos de los suyos. En lo que sí no tengo amparo es en lo demás, y no me queda más recurso que apelar a la bondad de los lectores.
>
> EL AUTOR.
>
> (Obras literarias completas 149)

It seems rather unusual that a writer of Altamirano's stature would feel the need to explain to his readers something as obvious as that the reading time of a narrative rarely reflects the likely temporal duration of the events related in the text (Toolan, Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction 55).

In terms of content, setting, and characterization, Clemencia is very similar to the later work El Zarco. The action of Clemencia takes part largely in the city of Guadalajara just prior to the French occupation on January 5th, 1864. Similar to El Zarco and his other novels, Altamirano provided the reader with accurate descriptions of the landscape, climate, flora, architecture, and general characteristics of the inhabitants of the places in which the action takes place. In contrast to El Zarco, though, there is a greater emphasis on the sentimental side of the story. About two thirds of the novel are dedicated almost entirely to the affairs of the heart. In El Zarco, on the other hand, the historical aspect is more important. Clemencia is written in a highly emotional tone, whereas the language of El Zarco is more sober and constrained.

The choice of characters is very similar to that of El Zarco. There are four main characters, two male and two female, who are essentially opposites in terms of how they look and how they act. Fernando Valle and Enrique Flores are both commanders in the liberal army, but their career and personal goals are guided by entirely different motives. Enrique Flores is a handsome young officer with a promising army career ahead of him. He is of good upbringing, and knows how to charm women both old and young. But he is ambitious, self-centered, and opportunistic. When it comes to loyalty, he is loyal only to himself. He doesn't think twice about selling military secrets to the enemy, nor about taking credit for the good deeds of others. Luck seems to be always on his side: after he is put in jail for treason, Fernando Valle helps him escape. Flores, however, feels no remorse whatsoever as Fernando Valle is executed for his involvement in the escape.

Fernando Valle, on the other hand, has a noble heart. He sacrificed his life to ease the pain of his beloved Clemencia, who was madly in love with Flores and couldn't bear seeing him die in front of a firing squadron. People, including Clemencia, don't recognize Valle's inner worth until the very end. In contrast to Flores's blond hair and blue eyes which were—and still are—considered as signs of moral, social, and intellectual superiority in Latin American countries, Valle has the dark skin and dark hair characteristic of the *mestizo* or mixed race. In addition, he is not as well versed in social manners as Flores. His shyness is often mistaken for selfishness. Needless to say, he is not very popular among women. Altamirano, however, endowed Valle, like the blacksmith Nicolás in El Zarco, with the qualities he admired most in a human being: noble-heartedness, civic-mindedness, and selflessness.

The two female protagonists, Isabel and Clemencia, are also opposites, although in their case the differences in personality are not as pronounced as in the case of the two men. They are opposites mostly in their type of beauty—one is blond and has the innocent soft look of an angel, the other is dark-haired and has the fiery temperament normally associated with Mediterranean women. Misled by Flores's dazzling appearance and proud demeanor, the women become rivals as they pursue his attentions. In the same vein they ignore Valle because of his unattractiveness. They become aware too late of Flores's shallowness and lack of integrity. Valle's heroic sacrifice makes Clemencia realize at the end of the novel that Valle has all the moral qualities she always looked for in a man. Unfortunately, neither her pleas nor her father's financial and social position can rescue Valle from being executed. After his death, Clemencia decides to spend the rest of her days in a convent.

Aside from the apologetic note quoted earlier, there are not many German or other foreign references in Clemencia. Most of the references that are available are not particularly relevant, except for a set of quotations taken from two tales by E.T.A. Hoffmann which appear right at the start of the novel. The way in which Altamirano incorporated these two particular quotations in his narrative reflects the fact that he must have been quite familiar with Hoffmann, particularly with one important aspect of his writing: his widespread use of narrative frames. Abrams defines the "frame-story" as a "[...] preliminary narrative within which one or more of the characters proceeds to tell a story" (A Glossary of Literary Terms 173). This narrative device originated in the Orient, probably in India. Later it was adopted also in the West. Two of the earliest and most prominent European examples are Boccaccio's Decameron (1353) and Chaucer's versified Canterbury Tales (ca. 1387). In the late 18th and early 19th centuries this narrative device was popular among the German romantics and pre-romantics. Wieland's Hexameron von Rosenhain, Tieck's Phantasus, Goethe's Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten, and Hoffmann's Die Serapions-Brüder are a few examples (Pikulik 15).

Altamirano had probably encountered this narrative tool often times during his study of Europe's literary masterpieces. A good number of his works are structured accordingly, and there is also enough evidence to support the notion that he planned to publish one or two collections of individual stories or short novels connected by a frame-story, or by some other common denominator, in the manner of Hoffmann's collections Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier (1814), Die Serapions-Brüder (1819), and Nachtstücke (1816/17). The closest he came to this structure was with Idilios y Elegías (Memorias de un Imbécil), a project he never finished. Fortunately, the frame-story has been preserved. It is written in the form of a short letter to G.G. Gostkowski, the editor of the newspaper El domingo. The letter creates the illusion that the stories that follow were written by someone other than the editor, or the author of the letter. The author of the letter (who is presumably Altamirano—although he uses the mysterious initials "P.M.") claims to have done nothing more than to forward the stories to the editor of El domingo.[33]

Many of his individual works, nonetheless, especially those that became part of the collection Cuentos de invierno, include some kind of frame-story. Among these, it is

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[33] The letter reads as following:

IDILIOS Y ELEGIAS
(Memorias de un Imbécil)

A Gustavo G. Gostkowski

Mi querido amigo:

El pobre muchacho con cuyo carácter diabólico tanto hemos luchado Ud. y yo, ha partido por fin hoy, resuelto a seguir nuestros consejos. ¡Quiera el cielo que ellos le curen y le libren de ir a un hospital de locos, o de arrojarse al mar, lo que sería para nosotros doblemente sensible!

Al despedirse me encargó enviase a Ud., pues se lo dedicaba, el consabido cuaderno en que ha escrito sus impresiones en forma de novelitas, a las que ha puesto un título digno de su extravagante numen: MEMORIAS DE UN IMBECIL. [...] Si se decide Ud. a publicar eso en *El Domingo*, no vendrá tan mal, porque al menos los lectores tendrán una historia pequeña pero completa en cada número.

Además nuestro amigo dejó a Ud. su retrato: ¿para qué diablos lo quiere Ud.? He preferido regalarlo a mi vecina, que al leer el título del cuaderno que le enseñé derramó un lagrimón enorme, diciendo: *¡No era tan bestia !*

Si los lectores repiten un elogio semejante, el miserable autor debe arrojarse al mar, ahora que van a presentársele las más bellas oportunidades.

Sabe Ud. que le quiere su afectísimo— P.M.

Mixcoac, Mayo 23 de 1872.

(Obras literarias completas 377)

Clemencia that has the best developed frame-story: one cold and stormy winter night, "Doctor L… " (as the authorial narrator calls him to safeguard his real identity) tells his dinner guests a true story that occured during his years of service in the liberal ranks during the time of the French invasion of Puebla. The doctor decides to share the story with his guests as a result of them noticing a framed piece of paper on one of the walls of the drawing room. The paper contains the following handwritten quotations:

> *"Ningún ser puede amarme, porque nada*
> *hay en mí de simpático ni de dulce".*
>
> HOFFMANN
> *El corazón de Agata.*
>
> *"Ahora que es ya muy tarde para volver*
> *al pasado, pidamos a Dios para nosotros*
> *la paciencia y el reposo…"*
>
> HOFFMANN
> *La cadena de los destinados.*

(Obras literarias completas 6)

The German original wording reads "O Sie haben Recht, Frau Geheime Rätin, ich muß allein stehen, kein menschliches Herz darf sich mir anschmiegen, alles was Freundschaft, was Liebe vermag, prallt wirkungslos ab von diesem steinernen Herzen" (E.T.A. Hoffmann sämtliche Werke 3,321) in the case of the first quotation; and "'Frieden und Ruhe über uns, Euchar!' —'Ja', erwiderte Euchar gerührt, 'ja, Viktorine, Frieden und Ruhe über uns, die ewige Macht läßt kein mißverstandenes Leben ohne Hoffnung'" (E.T.A. Hoffmann. Poetische Werke 8,189) in the case of the second.

"El corazón de Agata" (or "Das steinerne Herz" in the original German) was published in the second volume of the collection Nachtstücke; "La cadena de los destinados" (or "Der Zusammenhang der Dinge") is part of the famous collection Die Serapions-Brüder. The same quotations are included in Clemencia on two separate occasions; once in the frame-story in the form just shown, and again in one of the final chapters of the novel, just prior to Valle's death. In the second case they are slightly reworded and built into the main text, and are used by Valle as he relates the unfortunate story of his life during his last conversation with doctor L... :

> En cuanto al estado de mi corazón, confieso a usted que nunca he amado antes de llegar a Guadalajara, porque francamente no he sido simpático a las mujeres [emphasis added]; y alguna vez que me he inclinado a alguna, pronto su desvío me ha hecho comprender que la molestaba, y tímido por carácter, pero altivo en el fondo, me sentía humillado y me retiraba pronto.
>
> (Altamirano, Obras literarias completas 142)

Valle's final words to the doctor are taken from "Der Zusammenhang der Dinge":

> Pero ¿qué hemos de hacer? 'Puesto que es ya tarde para volver al pasado, pidamos a Dios para nosotros la paciencia y el reposo'. Mañana dormiré para siempre. Adiós, amigo mío." (emphasis added) (143)

Apart from the fact that both protagonists have fared very badly in the arena of love, there are not too many similarities between "Das steineme Herz" and Clemencia. The protagonist of "Das steineme Herz" had largely been responsible for his own fate, whereas Valle had become the victim of the tendency of people to judge others based on how they present themselves in society. Women in particular, had always rejected Valle because of his unflattering looks and serious demeanor, without bothering to ascertain his true values and personality first. His colleagues in the army had done no different.

To highlight the potentially catastrophic effects of judging someone based solely on that person's physiognomy, had been one of Hoffmann's main concerns in his tale

"Der Zusammenhang der Dinge". The two male characters Ludwig and Euchar are very different from each other, both inside and outside. With the depiction of these two men of very different characteristics, Hoffmann exemplified and ridiculed the fact that society can be easily deceived by outer appearances. Euchar looked like a reserved and serious person. Society therefore concluded that his personality was also reserved. His friend Ludwig, on the other hand, always effusive and energetic in his demeanor was thought to have a similarly lively character. In reality, the exact opposite was true. Along the same lines, Altamirano adopted the opposing character pairs of Valle/Flores, Clemencia/Isabel for Clemencia, and Nicolás/Zarco, Manuela/Pilar for El Zarco. The intention of both Hoffmann and Altamirano was to shed light on the inability of society to look beyond the surface, and also to illustrate the catastrophic consequences that a misjudgement of this kind can have on a person's life.

Another parallel between Hoffmann and Altamirano was their preoccupation with destiny, although Hoffmann explored the question of whether luck and misfortune are products of pure chance, or else brought on by the hand of a higher force, in much more detail than Altamirano. In "Spielerglück", for example, Hoffmann states: "[daß das], was wir Zufall nennen, [die] unsichtbare Hand der höhern Macht [ist]" (qtd. in Pikulik 178). And in "Der Zusammenhang der Dinge", Hoffmann explains that the marriage of the heroine Viktorine to Ludwig, a man she despised, instead of to Euchar whose noble heart she admired, was the result of the workings of a "finstre[n] Geist" (qtd. in Pikulik 198). In Clemencia, Valle wonders why good people are often hit by the worst of tragedies, while the wicked seem to sail through life blessed with good fortune[34]:

> [...] No se aflija usted por mí, le aseguro que creo una fortuna que me fusilen. Estoy fastidiado de sufrir, la vida me causa tedio, la fatalidad me persigue, y me

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[34] This basic idea is a common theme in literature. It was already expressed in the Old Testament, especially in Ecclesiastes (e.g. 9:11).

> ha vencido, como era de esperarse. Me agrada que cese una lucha en que desde niño he llevado la peor parte. Voy a contar a usted algo de mi vida en cuatro palabras, usted indagará lo demás, y cuando se acuerde de mí procure usted añadir el estudio de lo que me ha pasado a los demás que haga, procurando descifrar esto que en la tierra llamamos *la mala suerte* . Yo no sé si en buena filosofía estará admitida la influencia de la Fatalidad, yo ignoro esas cosas; pero el hecho es que sin haber hecho nada que me hubiese acarreado el castigo del cielo, que sintiéndome con un alma inclinada a todo lo noble y bueno, he sido muy infeliz y he visto cernerse siempre la tempestad de la desgracia sobre mi humilde cabaña, al mismo tiempo que he visto brillar el cielo con todas sus pompas sobre el palacio del malvado, que se levantaba frente a mí, insolente en medio de su fortuna.
>
> (Altamirano, Obras literarias completas 139)

Altamirano's view of destiny as an inexplicable external force coincides with Hoffmann's. The major difference is that in those works of Hoffmann which include the question of destiny, it usually becomes the central focus of the work (see "Spielerglück", "Der Zusammenhang der Dinge", or Die Elixiere des Teufels), whereas for Altamirano the discussion of destiny in Clemencia was only of secondary importance, limited to the one chapter with the title "La Fatalidad". [35]

Overall, there are only few similarities between Clemencia and the two tales by Hoffmann quoted in the novel. There are, however, traces of other works, especially in connection with the design of the frame-story. Neither "Das steinerne Herz" nor "Der Zusammenhang der Dinge" have a frame-story in and by themselves, that is when they are read outside the context of the collections which they form part of. Since it is not clear whether Altamirano had access to the full collections of Hoffmann's works, or just to individual stories, nor whether he read these stories in translation or in the original German (in which case the probability of him being familiar with one or more of Hoffmann's original collections would have been much greater), it is hard to assess whether Altamirano was familiar with the kind of frame-work that forms the spine of collections like *Die Serapions-Brüder*.

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[35] Victor Hugo's novel Notre-Dame de Paris (1831) contains a chapter, "Ananke", which discusses destiny on similar terms. Altamirano was very fond of Hugo; he considered Les Misérables as the "greatest social novel" of the century (Nacci 40). Although most of Altamirano's comments found in his critical writing refer to the latter novel, there are also indications that he was well acquainted with the former. In his Revistas literarias de México, for example, there is a remark about Gringoire, a character in Hugo's Notre-Dame de Paris: "Pedro Gringorius, el delicioso tipo dibujado por Víctor Hugo" (qtd. in La literatura nacional I,65). Altamirano's decision to include the subject of destiny in Clemencia might therefore have had its origin not only in the work of E.T.A. Hoffmann, but also to a great extent in that of Victor Hugo.

French translations [36] were quite popular at the time. Translations coming from Spain, on the other hand, were few in number and of questionable quality.[37] Judging by Altamirano's command of the French language, it makes sense to assume that Altamirano read Hoffmann mainly in French translation. In that case he was most probably exposed to editions which often diverted quite significantly from the original German editions because they combined stories from various collections (i.e.

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[36] Beginning in the late 1820's, Hoffmann became one of the most widely read and translated German authors in France. The initial reception of Hoffmann in France coincided with one of France's major periods of social and literary change. The translations of M. Loève-Veimar published between 1829-1833 opened the door for the publication of many other French editions of Hoffmann in the following two decades. Some other relevant translations published in the 1830's and early 1840's include those by Toussenel, Egmont, Christian, and La Bédollière. Even some of France's greatest writers including Marmier and Gérard de Nerval took pride in translating Hoffmann. Others like Musset, Balzac, and Gautier praised Hoffmann's work extensively. (Kaiser, *E.T.A. Hoffmann* 180-81)

[37] At the time, the Spanish literary scene was dominated by the historical novels of Walter Scott. Anything written by Scott was taken at face value in Spain. A Spanish translation of Scott's damaging essay about Hoffmann was published in Spain in 1830, predisposing the Spanish audiences against anything written by Hoffmann. As a result, there were very few Spanish translations of the tales of Hoffmann between 1830 and 1870. By far the best and most complete edition of Hoffmann published during this period in Spain was a two volume collection with the title *Obras completas de E.T.A. Hoffmann*, followed by the annotation "Cuentos Fantásticos traducidos por D. A. M. y adornados con primorosas láminas abiertas en acero por el distinguido artista Don Antonio Roca" (Barcelona: Imprenta de Llorens Hermanos, 1847). The identity of the translator was never identified, nor is this edition a complete edition as the title indicates, but rather the translation of a popular French edition which had appeared in Paris in 1840. The titles contained in the Spanish translation are the following: "El señor Formica", "Barbara Rollofin", "Dos Originales", "El viejo comediante", "El dux y su esposa", "El consejero Krespel", "El hombre de arena", "Ignacio Denner", "La visión" in volume 1, and "Fortuna en el juego", "La señora de Scudéry", "La Vampira", "El Mayorazgo", "El magnetizador", "Las aventuras de la noche de Silvestre", "El enano Zacarías, apellido Cinabrio", "Don Juan", "El enlace de las circumstancias", "El corazón de Piedra", "La casa desierta", "Maestro Martín y sus aprendices", "La iglesia de los jesuitas", "La corte de Artus", "Noticia de las últimas aventuras del perro Berganza" in volume 2. (Tietz, "E.T.A. Hoffmann und Spanien" 58-63)

Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier, *Die Serapions-Brüder*, and the *Nachtstücke*) in a rather indiscriminate fashion. As a result, frame-stories of the nature of the one contained in *Die Serapions-Brüder* could not be preserved. Unless individual stories had a frame-story of their own (such as is the case in "Rat Krespel", "Doge und Dogaresse", or "Das öde Haus"), this important dimension of Hoffmann's narrative was otherwise lost.

P. Christian's edition of *Contes fantastiques de Hoffmann* (Lavigne: Paris, 1843), for example, contains seventeen of Hoffmann's stories, most of which are taken either from *Die Serapions-Brüder* or from the *Nachtstücke*. Only a few are from the *Fantasiestücke*. There is a good indication that Altamirano might have been familiar with this particular edition. The Spanish titles of the two stories of Hoffmann as they appear in *Clemencia* agree word for word with the corresponding French titles in Christian's edition. The original Geman title "Das steinerne Herz" is translated as "Le Coeur d'Agate" in Christian's *Contes fantastiques*. Altamirano used the title "El corazón de Agata" in *Clemencia*; "Der Zusammenhang der Dinge" appears as "La Chaine des Destinées" in the French edition, and as "La cadena de los destinados" in *Clemencia*.[38] The same holds true for the actual quotations used by Altamirano in the first chapter of *Clemencia*. The expressions "Nul être ne peut m'aimer, car il n'y a plus rien en moi de sympathique et de doux" (Christian 420), and "Maintenant qu'il est trop tard pour revenir vers le passé, demandons à Dieu, pour nous, la patience et le repos!" (276) are very similar to Altamirano's. There is, however, a considerable discrepancy between the original German wording and Altamirano's Spanish translation (see pg. 99).

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[38] Henry Egmont's titles "L'enchaînement des choses" and "Le coeur de pierre" in *Oeuvres Complètes de E.T.A. Hoffmann* (Paris: Perrotin, 1840), on the other hand, are closer to the original German titles. Likewise, the titles of the 1847 Spanish edition *Obras completas de E.T.A. Hoffmann* are different from the titles that appear in *Clemencia*. They read "El enlace de las circumstancias" and "El corazón de Piedra" respectively.

If Altamirano had access only to French editions of Hoffmann's works, such as the one by P. Christian, then neither of the stories quoted in Clemencia would have served as sources for the novel's frame-story. Some of the other tales included in the edition of P. Christian, however, have a more or less elaborate frame-story. Such is the case of "Le Chant d'Antonia" ("Rat Krespel") and "Annunziata" ("Doge und Dogaresse") The French version of "Rat Krespel", for example, begins with the description of a group of friends who have gathered during a cold and stormy winter night to enjoy each others company with a glass of punch. During the course of their conversation, Theodor decides to tell his friends the unusual story of counsellor Krespel. The frame-story of Clemencia is very similar in content. Escaping the cold winter night with a glass of their host's famous *Kirschwasser* punch, the guests of "doctor L..." settle back to listen to their host tell them the sad story of Fernando Valle.

The frame-story of "Doge und Dogaresse" also exhibits some similarities with the frame-story of Clemencia. Hoffmann's frame-story opens with the description of a painting depicting an old man standing next to a beautiful young woman. While the man appears to be proud and powerful, the woman has a sad and longing expression in her eyes. The painting described by Hoffmann was based on an actual painting by the German artist Karl Wilhelm Kolbe entitled "Doge und Dogaresse" which had been exhibited in an art gallery in Berlin in 1816. Hoffmann's frame-story shows a group of curious onlookers who wonder whether the painting had been inspired by true historical events or not. As they try to decipher the Italian verses engraved in the frame of the portrait, an unnamed stranger approaches them to tell them about the tragic lives of the Venetian doge Marino Falieri and his wife Annunziata.

In Clemencia, it is the two quotations of Hoffmann written on a piece of paper that cause the doctor to tell the story of how he came into the possession of that paper. At the end of the novel, the link between nuclear- and frame-story is established as the doctor recounts how Valle entrusted him with the page on which he had personally copied the lines of Hoffmann just hours before his death:

> Hoy me han traído un libro para leer. Eran los Cuentos de Hoffmann. He leído dos; y como un desgraciado busca siempre en lo que lee los pensamientos que están en consonancia con sus penas y sus propias ideas, he copiado en ese papel esos dos; guarde usted ese papel en su cartera, y cuando lo vea recuérdeme. Me es grato pensar que usted me recordará. La memoria de un alma compasiva es la más santa de las tumbas.
>
> (Altamirano, Obras literarias completas 142)

The doctor serves therefore both as a character in the frame-story and in the nuclear story (although there he appears only briefly), and as internal narrator and key witness.

It has been seen then that the frame-story of Clemencia contains not only references to Hoffmann's "Das steinerne Herz" and "Der Zusammenhang der Dinge", but also elements from the frame-stories of "Rat Krespel" and "Doge und Dogaresse". Like Hoffmann, Altamirano introduced a fictitious frame-story to confer an even greater degree of authenticity to a nuclear story which already contains, next to imaginary characters and events, the description of real places and documented historical happenings. Apart from the references to Hoffmann studied up to this point, Clemencia contains only a few additional German references. Most of these might be ignored, since they are not too relevant. Such is the case of the brief mention of Alexander von Humboldt in chapter VI in connection with the description of the city of Guadalajara, or the comment about the German origin of the Christmas tree. Lastly, a comparison between German and Italian music is used to establish the differences in personalities between Isabel and Clemencia.

Julia

The short novel Julia was first published in 1870 under the title of Una noche de julio in the newspaper El siglo XIX, which was well-known at the time. It was published again in 1880 with its new title Julia as part of the collection Cuentos de invierno. Altamirano had been encouraged to prepare this collection, which also included Las tres flores, La navidad en las montañas, and Clemencia, by his friend, the journalist and editor Filomeno Mata. The action of Julia begins during a rainy night in the summer of 1854. Even though the story covers a period of approximately ten years, most of the action takes place during the summer of 1854, and again in the year of 1863 during the time of the French occupation of the city of Puebla. Remaining true to his intention to place the action of his novels—with the exception of Atenea and Las tres flores—within a historically and geographically accurate context, Altamirano set the action of Julia in actual towns and cities of central Mexico (i.e. Puebla, Taxco, Cuernavaca, and Mexico City), and also made reference to true historical events.

Despite the historically and geographically accurate details, Julia is, in essence, a fictitious story of unrequited love. Unlike the other works of Altamirano which deal with the subject of unrequited love, Julia is different in that the male protagonist makes the conscious decision to forget the woman who rejected him by applying himself instead, in body and soul, to free his beloved Mexico from the oppressors. Joining the liberal ranks, he becomes in a relatively short period one of Mexico's best-known generals. Many years later, however, the object of the protagonist's early unhappy love, changes her mind, and suddenly realizes that she had loved him all along. But for Julián, the mission to free his country had become the principal focus of his life. As for matters of the heart, Julián had decided long ago to relinquish all dreams of romantic love for the fleeting pleasures of carnal desire. He began to see love as a disease that needs to be cured. The very last sentence of Julia reads: "El amor es como el vómito: se cura la primera vez y no vuelve a atacar nunca" (Altamirano, Obras literarias completas 201).

As mentioned before, all of Altamirano's works of fiction are built around a love story. Generally, the love story is embedded within a historical framework which is consistent with the author's preoccupation with the political and social situation of his country, as well as with his desire to create a literary work with a uniquely Mexican flavor. In most of his novels, though, especially in the cases of Clemencia, El Zarco, and La navidad en las montañas, the sentimental aspect never really becomes an integral part of the broader picture. The love affairs of the protagonist usually end tragically and the struggle for political unity and social justice never overlap. The outcome of one subplot does not affect the outcome of the other. Julia, on the other hand, is Altamirano's only work in which he managed to integrate the sentimental with the political. The critics seem to have overlooked this aspect, and have disregarded Julia for the most part as a rather flat story with little or no value.[39]

The truth of the matter is that at the center of what appears to be just another inconsequential story of unfulfilled love lies a profound preoccupation with the meaning of freedom from both an individual and a collective perspective. Because of his own liberal convictions, Altamirano was a staunch supporter of national liberty, and he fervently admired all writers, whether foreign or local, who expressed a similar view. At first sight, Julia does not seem like fertile ground for a discussion of freedom. Nonetheless, the nature of the personal stories of the two protagonists allowed Altamirano to discuss liberty from two different angles: the personal as described in the story of Julia, and the social as reflected in Julián's quest for a free Mexico. The basic message is that any human being, and any country, should be allowed to exercise one of the most basic rights of humanity, the right of self-determination.

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[39] The famous scholar José Luis Martínez stated the following in a 1984 revised version of an essay about Altamirano he had published originally in 1955: "La primera parte de las desventuras de Julia parecen tan inverosímiles y forzadas como las de un relato folletinesco, y aunque las peripecias que conocemos al final se vean animadas por las descripciones de Tasco [sic], la inconsecuencia original del planteamiento del asunto no permite que la novela se salve para el gusto contemporáneo" ("Altami-rano novelista" 12). Along the same lines, Salvador Reyes Nevares calls Julia "[...] una obra menor y defectuosa", but he concedes that a modern reader might still find some pleasure in reading it: "*Julia* todavía hoy puede ser leída con agrado" (Obras literarias completas de Ignacio M. Altamirano 154).

Even though Altamirano did not openly write about liberty, there are several elements that indicate that liberty is indeed the central theme of this novel. During the very first exchange between Julián and the external narrator in chapter 1, for example, Julián quotes a passage by Schiller to illustrate the essence of youth: "[La juventud] es el tiempo en *que baila delante del carro de la vida un cortejo de risueños fantasmas: el Amor con su dulce premio, la Fortuna con su corona de oro; la Gloria con su aureola de estrellas; la Verdad con su brillo de sol,* como dice el poeta Schiller" (Obras literarias completas 155). These lines are originally from "Die Ideale", one of Schiller's philosophical poems. It consists of eleven stanzas, each of which has eight lines, and was first included in Musen-Almanach für das Jahr 1796. The lines quoted by Altamirano are from the seventh stanza, lines three through eight, and they read as following in the original:

> Wie tanzte vor des Lebens Wagen / Die luftige Begleitung her! / Die Liebe mit dem süßen Lohne, / Das Glück mit seinem goldnen Kranz, / Der Ruhm mit seiner Sternenkrone, / Die Wahrheit in der Sonne Glanz!

As can be seen, Altamirano's version—regardless of whether it is his own translation or not—is almost a word for word rendering of the original. As a whole, "Die Ideale" describes the disillusionment and loss of ideals that accompany a person's path through the various stages of life. The dreams and highflying illusions of youth are lost as the maturing person discovers the realities of life. And at the end of the road, friendship and work remain the only two steady companions, while love, luck, glory, hope and truth have been supplanted by doubt and despair:

> Doch, ach! schon auf des Weges Mitte / Verloren die Begleiter sich, / Sie wandten treulos ihre Schritte, / Und einer nach dem andern wich. / Leichtfüßig war das Glück entflogen, / Des Wissens Durst blieb ungestillt, / Des Zweifels finstre Wetter zogen / Sich um der Wahrheit Sonnenbild. (57-64)

Schiller's poem reflects Julián's passage from the enamoured youth to the mature man who has lost all illusions regarding the existence of romantic love. At no point does the poem deal with the subject of liberty.

The references to liberty in Julia appear usually in connection with either one of the two protagonists. The relationship between Schiller and the topic of liberty is thus never established overtly. The reputation of Schiller as the "poet of liberty" had probably made it seem unnecesary for Altamirano—maybe even in poor taste—to state the obvious.[40] The character of Julia serves to exemplify the concept of liberty and the right of self-determination from an individual's point of view. Altamirano describes the courageous attempts of a young woman to escape her stepfather's autochratic ruling. Despite the danger of acquiring the reputation of a fallen woman, and therefore being repudiated by friends and family, Julia decides to flee her parental home. Unlike many other women of her class, who were either unaware of their condition, or else too scared to change it, Julia is fully conscious of her lamentable situation, and desperately seeks to modify it. Similar to the heroes in Schiller's dramas, Julia refuses to bow silently to her oppressors, but instead fights for the two ideals that are most important to her: liberty and love—love to be understood in terms of having the freedom to love whoever her heart choses.

How important both of these values are for Julia can be appreciated in a number of comments throughout the first half of the novel:

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[40] It seems quite strange, that Altamirano, who wanted to make literature accessible even to those readers who had not been fortunate enough to have a good education, would have included references to foreign authors or foreign works without a more fully developed context, assuming simply that everyone else was as familiar with these works and their meaning as himself, or as his colleagues or students!

> — [...] He querido emanciparme del poder de mi familia y escapar a una suerte a que otras se someten sin replicar. [...] Pero ¡yo! Yo no tengo organización para aceptar el papel de víctima. [...] Yo, nacida en la riqueza y educada en medio de las comodidades, estaba dispuesta a renunciar a todo eso; pero nunca a mi libertad [emphasis added] y a mi dicha. Todavía he hecho más: he renunciado a mi reputación, [...]
>
> (Obras literarias completas 173)

At another point, Julián observes the astounding physical and psychological effects that her newly acquired freedom and her love for Mr. Bell (much to Julián's regret) seem to be having on Julia: "Llegamos a esta risueña y linda ciudad, en que Julia estuvo loca de contento; [...] en la brisa embalsamada que respiraba entre los fértiles huertos que embellecen esa población, parecía recibir el aliento de vida del amor y la libertad" (emphasis added) (168). Julia herself is aware of the joys that liberty has brought to her heart: "¡Qué hermoso debe ser este retiro, respirando el aire de la libertad y amando y siendo amado!" (emphasis added) (170). The recurrent use of images of air and life communicate the message that freedom is as essential for an individual as the air he or she breathes.

After the whereabouts of Julia are discovered, she is not forced to return to her stepfather's house, but is allowed instead to stay with more amicable relatives, as well as to take possession of her late father's inheritance, giving her thus the additional freedom that comes with financial independence. Considering her underprivileged position of a woman living in a patriarchal society, Julia succeeded in asserting her right to make her own choices.[41] Unfortunately, she didn't fare as well in terms of love.

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[41] In view of the predominantly patriarchal attitude of Mexico's ruling classes, as well as the lack of awareness about women's issues that existed during those days—still a problem in Latin America today—, it is quite commendable that Altamirano chose a female character to illustrate the concept of personal freedom. As was mentioned in the previous two chapters, Altamirano was conscious of the precarious living conditions and the lack of opportunities of some of the underprivileged groups living in his country, such as the indigenous peoples, the mestizo population, women, and the poor in general. Throughout his life Altamirano fought for a more equal treatment of these groups. He was

Julia had at first ignored Julián's love for her, because she had been blinded by the good looks, the money and the social status of Mr. Bell. Years later, however, Julia realized that Julián's sincere affection was worth much more than Mr. Bell's pursuit of the superficial values of financial and social security. But the confession of her true feelings comes too late. Julián had never been able to forgive her earlier love for a man who was wealthier and better looking than himself, but nonetheless superficial and opportunistic in character.

The use of liberty as a leitmotiv gave Altamirano the opportunity to introduce the historical element without substantially disrupting the plot line. The shift from Julia's personal fight for freedom to the account of Julián's participation in the armed struggle against Mexico's foreign invadors occurs smoothly thanks to the use of that one common denominator. Julián had dealt with the disillusionment of Julia's rejection by turning his attention to a nobler mission: the defense of his country's sovereignty ("[...] sí, esperanza, no en Julia, sino en la Patria. Gracias al cielo, comenzaba a romper las tinieblas de mi alma algo parecido a un fulgor, cada vez más creciente. Era el amor a la libertad [emphasis added]" (190)). In the case of Julia, the quest for liberty had been a personal one, for Julián it had acquired the dimensions of a political mission whose outcome would affect the lives of thousands of his fellow countrymen. In most of Altamirano's narrative works, the sentimental and historical spheres seem to merely coexist, whereas in this novel they are integrated. Both characters share the same ideal, and a strong determination to fight for the achievement of this ideal.

The context in which the quote of Schiller appears in the first chapter of Julia is not really related to liberty—considering that Schiller included many passages dedicated to liberty in his dramas, it is strange that Altamirano selected a quote which has nothing to do with this topic. It is evident, nonetheless, that that particular quote was placed

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interested above all in making education accessible to everyone, regardless of gender, origin, race, or social class.

there with the definite purpose of preparing the stage for the introduction of the novel's main theme. In other novels by Altamirano, the meaning behind the foreign quotations or references included in the text is far more obvious. In Julia, however, it is up to the reader to establish the connection. This is possible only as long as the reader is aware of Schiller's reputation as "poet of liberty".

Compared to other texts, Altamirano used German references very sparingly in Julia. So sparingly, as a matter of fact, that they might be disregarded as inconsequential by a less discerning reader. The only other German reference that appears in Julia is of little importance from a literary point of view: it is a reference to Alexander von Humboldt included in one of the descriptions of the famous mining town of Taxco ("Taxco es un pueblo simpático, y su temperamento elogiado por el barón de Humboldt [...]" (169)). Humboldt had praised this picturesque town during his visit in the early 1800's. Julián's interest in collecting, preserving, and cataloguing rare plant specimens from the surrounding hills of Taxco is definitely an allusion to Humboldt's contributions to the study of Mexico's flora.

La navidad en las montañas

Altamirano's short novel La navidad en las montañas was first published in 1871 in the collection Album de navidad. It is considered as one of Altamirano's finest narrative works, and is one of only two works that over the years have been translated into English. Altamirano used the war of Reform as the historical background for this novel. The work does not reach, however, the status of his historical novel El Zarco. La navidad en las montañas is a unique story, nonetheless, because it reflects better than any other of Altamirano's works, his strong desire for the reconciliation of Mexico's warring political factions. The friendship that unfolds between a catholic priest and a liberal army officer in the course of the novel is a symbol of the unity (in both political and cultural terms) that Altamirano envisioned for Mexico.

The descriptions contained in La navidad en las montañas are among Altamirano's best, and the same is true for his polished use of the Spanish language. According to José Luis Martínez, this is probably Altamirano's best work in terms of the care with which he worked on the style and language:

> Fue, pues, *La navidad en las montañas* la obra novelesca que pulió con más cuidado Altamirano, la que más se reeditó en su tiempo y probablemente la que él mismo prefería. En las enmiendas sucesivas, y sobre todo en las de la última versión, se advierte el constante esfuerzo de corrección gramatical al mismo tiempo que huía de las expresiones afectadas para preferir las más llanas.
>
> ("Altamirano novelista" 16)

In contrast to the usual practice of Altamirano to describe real towns and villages in his novels, the small town at the centre of the action of La navidad en las montañas is of semi-Utopian character, and therefore quite different from the local towns and people normally depicted in his works. Thanks to the efforts of the local priest, the town has been converted into a completely self-sufficient, self-contained community. The town is so secluded that the hatred and intolerance at the root of the war of Reform have not yet reached it. The same spirit of tolerance and congeniality that exists among the townspeople is rapidly established between the priest and an army officer who arrives at nightfall asking for food and lodging. As the plot unfolds, the minister tells the officer the story of how he has helped the village people to emerge from their former state of "idolatry and barbarie" (Obras literarias completas 213) by teaching them better ways to work the land, and by giving them the opportunity to attend school. He confides to the captain that he will take no money for his services, but that he prefers to receive whatever the town's people can spare for him in terms of food or other daily necessities. He stresses, however, that he doesn't really need the contributions of his parishioners, but that he can very well manage on his own by producing his own food and most of the other things he needs to survive.

As member of the liberal army, the captain shows great interest in the minister's altruistic deeds, especially in view of the fact that during those days the Catholic Church seemed more interested in securing and expanding their position of power and their material wealth than in providing for the well-being of Mexico's marginalized classes ("Nada, pues, tenía de [sic] común el carácter de este buen sacerdote con los que yo había conocido por dondequiera" (Obras literarias completas 216)).[42] The captain compares him with the fictional characters of Heinrich Zschokke's Das Goldmacherdorf (1817) and Eugène Sue's Le juif errant (1844/45):

> Iba yo repasando en mi memoria los hermosos tipos ideales del buen sacerdote moderno, que conocía sólo en las leyendas, y a los cuales se parecía mi compañero de camino, [...] El uno era el virtuoso *Vicario de Aldea*, de Enrique Zschokke, cuyo diario había leído siempre con lágrimas, porque el ilustre escritor suizo ha sabido depositar en él raudales de inmensa ternura y de dulcísima resignación. [...] El otro era el *P.Gabriel*, de Eugenio Sué, que este fecundo novelista ha sabido hacer popular en el mundo entero con su famoso *Judío Errante* .
>
> (Obras literarias completas 215)

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[42] The protagonist of Altamirano's La navidad en las montañas is obviously very different from the representatives of the Catholic Church that Altamirano had known in his days. After the independence of Mexico from Spain, the Church as an institution had become concerned about losing the power it had gained during the time when Mexico was still a colony of Spain. During the constant fights that erupted between the conservative and liberal factions after the attainment of independence, the Church supported the conservative interests in order to safeguard its own power. As shown in La navidad en las montañas, Altamirano was not against religion *per se*. What he did not approve of, though, was the lack of concern of the Catholic Church regarding the solution of Mexico's pressing social problems.

A comment follows about a third work (Victor Hugo's Les Misérables), which—as the narrator aptly observes—had not been published at the time of the events, and therefore the captain—who is also the narrator—could not have possibly known about then: "En aquella época aún no había publicado Víctor Hugo sus *Miserables*, y por consiguiente no había yo admirado la hermosa personificación de monseñor Myriel, que tantas lágrimas de cariño ha hecho derramar después" (216).

The references to Zschokke, Sue and Hugo have the effect of instantaneously conferring Altamirano's character with a high measure of credibility and familiarity. By mentally comparing Altamirano's priest figure with the legendary priests of some of Europe's best known literary works, the reader automatically develops a similar attitude of reverence for the priest of La navidad en las montañas. Altamirano basically "borrowed" the fame and credibility that these authors had established for their own characters, thus considerably simplifying the task of having to build up an unknown character's fame from scratch. Aside from these three references, there are no further European, or for that matter German references in La navidad en las montañas. There is only a short mention of Alexander von Humboldt[43] in much the same vein as it ocurred in Julia. In both these works the reference to Humboldt functions as a sign of Altamirano's respect and admiration for what the figure of Humboldt represents for the Mexican people. It carries therefore no particular significance from a purely literary point of view.

Altamirano's characters are portrayed in such a way that their physical and psychological traits are in accordance with the overall moral or civic mission of the work, even at the risk of sacrificing originality and spontaneity. The same holds true for Zschokke's characters. However, the impact of Zschokke on Altamirano goes beyond the obvious similarities in characterization. Like Altamirano, Heinrich Zschokke (1771-1848) was a strong, multifaceted personality whose many interests included law, theology, philosophy, history, pedagogy, and politics. Zschokke was not only a minister himself, but also a well-liked teacher. As a politician he adhered to the liberal school of thought. A prolific writer, he published more than seventy short stories, along with various novels and theater plays, many of which display a moralizing tendency. His early stories were written under the influence of the Gothic novel; his later works, on the other hand, follow the model of the historical novel of Scott. In his day, Zschokke was the most read German author at home and abroad (Literaturlexikon. Autoren und Werke deutscher Sprache 12:523-24).

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[43] "[...] la cerca del atrio es un rústico enverjado formado por los vecinos con troncos de encina, en los que se ostentan familias enteras de orquídeas, que hubieran regocijado al buen barón de Humboldt [...]" (Obras literarias completas 217).

There is obviously a strong resemblance between the personalities, careers and interests of Zschokke and Altamirano. Altamirano must have been aware of this, and therefore developed a strong sense of affinity towards the Swiss author. It is of no surprise then that he used Zschokke's works, and in particular his novel Das Goldmacherdorf, as a model for his own. Das Goldmacherdorf describes the efforts of Oswald, son of a school teacher, to convert his wartorn village into a self-sufficient commune. Oswald is not a priest like Altamirano's protagonist, but his attempts to reform the school system, to improve farming and cattle-breeding, to encourage the co-operative trade of farming goods, to create a day-care system for the children of fieldworkers, etc., are very similar to what Altamirano portrayed in La navidad en las montañas. Moreover, Altamirano imbued his own protagonist with the attributes of two of Zschokke's characters: Oswald and the town's new priest who, contrary to his ignorant predecessor, embraces the most recent social and political innovations. Overall, La navidad en las montañas is indebted to the influence of Zschokke in more ways than just characterization: there are striking similarities between the plots of both La navidad en las montañas and Das Goldmacherdorf; both authors based their works on true historical events; both works were written from a liberal point of view, and in both cases the authors made sure that the characters and events depicted in their works supported liberalism as the only viable social philosophy; and for both authors, the object of writing was not to provide simple entertainment, but to educate the public.

Idilios y elegías (Memorias de un imbécil)

Following the successful publication of his Cuentos de invierno, Altamirano planned to compose another series of short novels with the collective title Idilios y elegías (Memorias de un imbécil). Whether the unhappy choice of the subtitle had anything to do with it or not is difficult to determine, but the fact is that Altamirano abandoned this project without comment before even finishing the second novel. The series was originally going to include a separate title for every single love affair the male protagonist had ever had. Every novel in the collection was to be named after each of the women who had paraded through the protagonist's life. The subtitle "Memorias de un imbécil" was supposed to allude to the fact that the unhappy outcome of each of these love affairs had caused the protagonist to slowly lose his memory, for which reason he decided to capture his fading memories on paper before it became too late.

The first story within the cycle is entitled "Antonia". It was published in the form of instalments in the newspaper El domingo between the months of June and August of 1872, and it tells the story of the protagonist's first encounter with love at the tender age of 13. Because of the protagonist's young age, as well as the circumstances surrounding his affection for a 15 year old peasant girl, the story quickly turns into a satire of the idyllic countryside romances that had been so popular during the 19th century and earlier. The narrator relates in a more cynical than compassionate tone the emotional ups and down of the young boy, as well as his feelings of inadequacy at losing his young and innocent beloved to a vulgar and corrupt commander of a transient military regiment.

The tone of this particular novel is very different from that of Altamirano's other compositions. "Antonia" is completely devoid of the edifying messages and moralizing intent that seem to be the foundation of Altamirano's narrative. Not only that, but he even treated topics which were normally sacred to him in a most degrading manner. On several occasions love is described in terms of carnal desire, ridiculing the kind of romantic love often depicted in literary works:

> Desde entonces comprendí que la aurora del amor es el deseo. Después he tratado en vano de convencerme, leyendo a los poetas platónicos, de que sucede lo contrario. [...] Puede que sea cierto, pero a mí no me sucedió así, y creo que a nadie le sucede; sólo que la hipocresía social y literaria impide que estas cosas se confiesen ingenuamente.
>
> (Altamirano, Obras literarias completas 382)

Altamirano also seized the opportunity to refute the belief that people in the countryside lead a life full of virtue and harmony: "Además, aunque lo contrario digan los defensores de las virtudes bucólicas, yo sé de cierto que la tierra de una aldea es la menos a propósito para cultivar [...] las flores de la inocencia. ¡Se ven tantas cositas en una aldea!" (381).

The same realistic tone is maintained in "Beatriz", the second novel in the collection Idilios y elegías (Memorias de un imbécil). The first chapter was published in El domingo in 1873, and the remaining three of the unfinished novel in El artista between July and December of 1874. Jorge, the protagonist, is now a few years older, and has left his native village to attend boarding school in Mexico City. Although he claims to be more mature and more knowledgeable in the arena of love, having learned his lesson from his first disillusionment with Antonia, the second episode is headed straight towards an even more ludicrous outcome. Two years into his schooling, Jorge is put in charge of a little boy named Luisito. Very soon Jorge becomes infatuated with Luisito's mother, a mature and elegant woman at least twenty years his senior.

Altamirano was probably aware of the dangerous waters he was getting into by portraying the illicit love affair between a married woman and a teenage boy. This might have been one of the reasons why he decided to leave the novel unfinished despite the fact that the initial chapters had already been published, and that the editors were probably waiting for the sequel. Neither "Antonia" nor "Beatriz" have any German references. There is, however, one quote from Shakespeare's The two Gentlemen of Verona at the beginning of "Antonia", and two quotes from Othello at the beginning of "Beatriz". Interestingly, Altamirano kept these references in their original English versions, whereas he always made sure to translate any German references. Overall it may be said that "Beatriz" and "Antonia" are probably Altamirano's poorest narrative works.

El Zarco

Written between 1885 and 1888, El Zarco. Episodios de la vida mexicana en 1861-63 (or El Zarco as it is commonly referred to for short) is considered by many as Altamirano's best historical novel. It is also Altamirano's second longest novel after Clemencia. The first thirteen chapters were read in person by the author in 1886 at the literary sessions of the Liceo Hidalgo. The complete novel was published posthumously in Barcelona, Spain, in 1901. The action of the novel takes place (as indicated in the title) between the years of 1861 and 1863, at a time when Mexico's sovereignty was being threatened from both within and outside its borders. The civil war that had ensued after the division of the Mexican troops into three warring factions—the Federal army, the Reactionary army, and the Liberal army—exposed the civilian population to all kinds of exploitation by the very forces that were supposed to protect them. The generalized state of confusion that governed the country because of this had encouraged the emergence of a powerful group of outlaws known as "los plateados". The "plateados" became accustomed to terrorize the civilian population, knowing that the authorities and the military were not only too busy fighting each other, but were also defending the country against the French.

Some of the leading characters of El Zarco are inspired by true historical figures. The leader of the bandits known as "El Zarco", and the vigilante Martín Sánchez are based on real persons, although their names and some of their features have been changed. President Benito Juárez, on the other hand, is depicted in both manner and appearance as he was in life. The action of the novel is centered around the life and fate of four fictional characters (two men and two women), who are total opposites in terms of their physical appearance and psychological makeup. They are Nicolás, an Indian of humble origin (some critics believe that Altamirano invested Nicolás, as well as Clemencia's Fernando Valle, with autobiographical traits) who works as chief blacksmith on one of the most prosperous *haciendas* of the region; the bandit known as "El Zarco"; Manuela, a pretty girl of fair skin and proud bearing who lives with her widowed mother in the nearby town of Yautepec; and Pilar, the goddaughter of Manuela's mother.

Nicolás is in love with Manuela. Her mother has given her blessing to the courtship despite Nicolás's origin. But Manuela despises Nicolás whom she secretely calls "pobre artesano" and "indio horrible" (Obras literarias completas 265). Nicolás, on the other hand, has failed to notice Pilar's sincere love for him and has unknowingly ignored her for the same reasons for which Manuela looks down on him. Pilar is an orphan of humble means who has enjoyed a good upbringing thanks to the generosity of her godmother. She is not blond and beautiful like Manuela, but has the coarser look of country people. However, like the two female protagonists in Altamirano's other famous historical novel Clemencia, the good-looking popular girl turns out to be superficial and even malevolent in her means and motives, whereas the shy and less attractive one is a true jewel in terms of her values and beliefs. Similar characteristics can be found in the two male protagonists, both in this novel and in Clemencia. Nicolás might be an Indian and an artisan, but he also has dignity, courage and integrity. "El Zarco", on the other hand, leader of the bandits, and object of Manuela's infatuation, is an attractive man with piercing blue eyes who has amassed a fortune through theft and murder.

After meeting secretely with "El Zarco" in her mother's garden for a number of times, Manuela decides to elope with him. Even though Altamirano proceeds later on to condemn Manuela's lack of scruples and absence of moral values, at least in the beginning he seems to want to alleviate her fault by blaming her decision on a lack of better judgement. The romantic adventure novels that she had been exposed to during her formative years, had obviously not been of the kind that would have opened her eyes to the workings of the real world:

> [Manuela], enamorada como estaba del joven bandido, había poetizado aquella vida, [...] había creado en su fantasía [...] un tipo especial novelesco y heroico. [...] ¿Qué mucho que Manuela, que había recibido alguna educación [...] y que aun había leído algunos libros romancescos [...] se hubiese forjado un ideal extraordinario, revistiendo a su amante bandido con los arreos de una imaginación extraviada?
>
> (Obras literarias completas 335)

Later on she will discover that life with an outlaw was not quite what she had imagined: "En vez de encontrar ese retiro misterioso y agreste, el Zarco la llevaba a esa especie de cárcel o mazmorra para hacerla vivir mezclada con mujeres ebrias y haraposas, con bandidos osados que no respetaban a las queridas de sus compañeros [...]" (336). The events that follow are quite predictable. Nicolás becomes aware of Pilar's feelings for him, and in turn falls in love with her. Manuela's mother dies of grief. "El Zarco" and his men are ambushed by the troops of the vigilante leader Martín Sánchez. Manuela dies at her lover's side after realizing with horror that only she was to blame for her pitiful situation.

Keeping in line with his other works, Altamirano also included foreign material in El Zarco. The two German references that appear in El Zarco are not in the form of direct quotations as is the case in other novels like Clemencia, but are limited to two brief comments regarding two of Goethe's most prominent female characters: Margarete from Goethe's legendary drama Faust, and Mignon from his famous "Mignon-Lieder".[44] The context in which Altamirano used the figure of Mignon in El Zarco is indicative of the first stanza of the particular "Mignon-Lied" that was originally a part of Goethe's novel Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre:

> Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühn,
> Im dunkeln Laub die Gold-Orangen glühn,
> Ein sanfter Wind vom blauen Himmel weht,
> Die Myrte still und hoch der Lorbeer steht,
> Kennst du es wohl?
> Dahin! Dahin
> Möcht ich mit dir, o mein Geliebter, ziehn.

(Goethe, Gedichte 88)

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[44] The Mignon of Wilhelm Meister is a tiny Italian girl who prefers to dress in man's clothing. Her unconventional personality, and obscure past make her a social outcast. For Goethe her Italian origin represented the spirit of "südliche Unmittelbarkeit" (Kindlers neues Literatur-lexikon).

The preceding lines describe a mythical place, a proud ancient country where myrtle and laurel grow strong and tall. Altamirano uses similar expressions to describe the town of Yautepec—which is, by the way, the name of a real town in central Mexico. Yautepec is a place just like Mignon's legendary Italy: "[...] un pueblo mitad oriental y mitad americano. [...] *Mignon* [emphasis added] no extrañaría su patria, en Yautepec, donde los naranjos y limoneros florecen todas las estaciones" (Obras literarias completas 257). And the lines that follow reflect almost literally the first two verses of Goethe's poem: "[...] naranjos y limoneros, grandes, frondosos, cargados siempre de frutos y de azahares que embalsaman la atmósfera con sus aromas embriagadores. [...] sus ramajes de un verde brillante y obscuro y cargados de pomas de oro [...]" (257).

Interestingly, Altamirano adopted only those elements which applied to Mexico. Orange and lemon trees are part of the Mexican flora, but myrtle and laurel are not. Instead, Altamirano substituted myrtle and laurel with banana plants and *maguey* (a native cactus plant). He made sure to preserve, though, the nostalgic tone and the sense of pride that emanate from Goethe's poem. He also made sure to emphasize that neither the banana plant nor the *maguey* are in any way inferior in their beauty and mightiness to laurel and myrtle: "[...] los plátanos suelen mostrar allí sus esbeltos troncos y sus anchas hojas, y los magueyes y otas zapotáceas elevan sus enhiestas copas sobre los bosquecillos [...]" (257). Considering how fond Altamirano was of his native Mexico, it comes as no surprise that he placed Mexico on the same level as such legendary places as Greece or Italy.

The reference to Goethe's "Mignon" serves to enhance Altamirano's description of the relatively unknown (at least for non-Mexicans) town of Yautepec. It is basically the same tool that Altamirano had used earlier in his novel La navidad en las montañas in order to place his own protagonist at the level of some of Europe's most prominent literary characters. The second and third stanzas of "Mignon" do not appear in El Zarco. The reference to dragon's brood in the third stanza ("Kennst du den Berg und seinen

Wolkensteg? / Das Maultier sucht im Nebel seinen Weg; / In Höhlen wohnt der Drachen alte Brut;") might contain a certain resemblance with the "plateados" and their hideout, but this similarity is too vague to constitute the base for any valid comparison.

Chapter 8 of El Zarco contains the second reference to Goethe. This chapter includes also some of the most forceful and electrifying passages of the entire novel. It describes in an exemplary manner the struggle between good and evil that takes place in Manuela's conscience just prior to her decision to follow "El Zarco". Prior to their elopement, "El Zarco" showers Manuela with precious gifts. Manuela knows that the money and the jewellery "El Zarco" has given her were snatched from defenseless murder victims. She nonetheless finds great pleasure in trying on the expensive jewels. The night before their escape, "El Zarco" presents Manuela with his latest acquisition: a pair of diamond earrings, a diamond ring, and two gem-set bracelets shaped in the form of snakes. After his departure, Manuela tries on the jewels, admiring her image in the garden fountain as she does so. For a brief moment she pauses to reflect about the symbollic meaning of the snakes:

> —¡Dos víboras! —dijo frunciendo el ceño—, ¡qué idea…! En efecto son dos víboras…, ¡el robo! ¡Pero bah! —añadió sonriendo y guiñando los ojos, casi llenos con sus grandes y brillantes pupilas negras…—, ¡qué me importa! ¡Me las da el Zarco, y poco me interesa que vengan de donde vinieren…!
>
> (Obras literarias completas 282)

Then she realizes with horror that the jewellery boxes are stained with blood. In the end, however, she succumbs to greed and avarice:

> Acababa de ver dos gotas de sangre fresca que manchaban el raso blanco de la caja, […]. Manuela permaneció muda y sombría durante algunos segundos; hubiérase dicho que en su alma se libraba un tremendo combate entre los últimos remordimientos de una conciencia ya pervertida y los impulsos irresistibles de

> una codicia desenfrenada y avasalladora. Triunfó ésta, como era de esperarse, y la joven, en cuyo hermoso semblante se retrataban entonces todos los signos de la vil pasión que ocupaba su espíritu, cerró, enarcando las cejas, la caja prontamente, la apartó con desdén, y no pensó más que en ver el efecto que hacían los ricos pendientes en sus orejas. (282)

At this point, Altamirano compares the reaction of Manuela with that of Margarete after she has found the jewels, provided by Mephistopheles, that Faust had hidden in her room:

> Manuela, abandonada a sí misma en aquella hora y de aquel modo, dejaba conocer en su semblante todas las expresiones de su vil pasión, [...] No era la *Margarita*, de Goethe, mirándose en el espejo, con natural coquetería, adornada con las joyas de un desconocido, sino una ladrona de la peor especie, dando rienda suelta a su infame codicia delante de aquel estanque de aguas turbias y negras. No era la virtud próxima a sucumbir ante la dádiva, sino la perversidad contemplándose en el cieno. [...] Así es que, sobre su cabeza radiante con los fulgores de los aretes robados, se veía en la sombra, no la cara burlona de Mefistóles [sic], el demonio de la seducción, sino la máscara pavorosa del verdugo, el demonio de la horca. (283)

The contrast between the reaction of the innocent Margarete and that of the greedy Manuela serve to underline the full extent of Manuela's perversion. Gretchen's response is significantly different from that of Manuela. Gretchen knew instinctively that there was something evil about the jewelry she found in her room: "Wer konnte nur die beiden Kästchen bringen? / Es geht nicht zu mit rechten Dingen!" (Faust I 83). Although she enjoys to parade in front of the mirror wearing the precious jewels ("Wenn nur die Ohrring meine wären! / Man sieht doch gleich ganz anders drein." (80)), she knows that they are not hers to keep. She is also aware, unlike Manuela, of how easily people can fall victims to the alluring powers of gold: "Nach Golde drängt, / Am Golde hängt / Doch alles. Ach wir Armen!" (81).

The fact that Gretchen is seduced later on by Faust means simply that she was too innocent and naïve to recognize his dishonest motives. Her inner core, though, remains uncorrupted throughout the whole ordeal. And that is the reason why her soul is saved in the end, despite the atrocious crimes she has committed. Her actions had been inspired all along by the sincere, unconditional love she had felt for Faust; a love so strong and pure that it would serve to save them both from damnation. Manuela, on the other hand, had none of the child-like innocence of Gretchen. She knew exactly where the jewels came from and how they were obtained. All her actions were driven by vanity and greed, including her "love" for "El Zarco". She "fell in love" with him because of the luxurious and adventurous life-style she thought he would give her. The poor, hard-working Nicolás, on the other hand, could offer her no such thing.

Greed has been one of the most widely explored motifs in literature throughout the ages. In the third edition of her famous handbook Motive der Weltliteratur, Elisabeth Frenzel states: "In keiner anderen Form enthüllt sich die menschliche Habsucht so sehr als geist- und seelenlos wie in der Gier nach Gold und Geld" (266). With the character of Manuela, Altamirano gave an exemplary portrayal of the dark, at times evil fascination that gold can exert over a person—to the extent of making that person set aside even the most basic of moral values. The direct comparison between Goethe's character Gretchen and Manuela, had the effect of producing one of the most vivid and convincing character portrayals in all of Altamirano's career as a novelist.

Atenea

The manuscript of Atenea was probably written around 1889, a little before Altamirano's departure to Europe on a diplomatic mission. It was left unfinished, and published for the first time by Altamirano's personal friend, Ezequiel A. Chávez, in 1935 as part of the volume Homenaje a Ignacio M. Altamirano (Imprenta Universitaria, México). The preserved fragment of Atenea constitutes, along with Las tres flores, one of Altamirano's most unusual compositions, substantially differing from his other narrative works in both content and style. The first difference that comes to the reader's attention is the fact that the story is set in Venice, whereas before Altamirano had always advocated the use of local Mexican settings. In his earlier works, even love had to be subordinated to the work's overall civil or moral agenda. In Atenea, on the other hand, Altamirano set aside his concerns about political and social reform.

The tone of Atenea is that of a sentimental confession, written in the form of a diary, with very few elements of realism. According to Salvador Reyes Nevares, Atenea contains certain early elements of modernism, a sign that Altamirano (despite his admitted preference for the historical novel) was not immune to the strong winds of change that were starting to permeate the literary scene:

> Acaso podría afirmarse que *Atenea* preludia al modernismo. Hay en ella cierta sensualidad de artista ante determinados elementos del cuadro, como por ejemplo el elemento arquitectónico. Hay afán ornamental en la descripción de Venecia y en la de los salones donde reina Atenea. El mismo nombre de ésta concuerda más con el espíritu modernista que con el romántico. Venecia [...] resuena ya en Altamirano de manera semejante a como después resonaría el nombre de Alejandría en Amado Nervo [...].

(Obras literarias completas 446)

The story—or at least the fragment that has been preserved—is narrated entirely in the first person by the male protagonist. In the first chapter, the reader learns that the protagonist has chosen to spend the rest of his life in Venice, in the hope that death will soon bring an end to his suffering. He had felt the need to leave his native America after the sudden death of his beloved wife. Venice with its mausoleum-like marble palaces offers a setting that is far more "in tune" with the lifeless barren state of the protagonist's soul than the exuberant color-filled landscapes of Latin America.

On the protagonist's first sightseeing trip, the *gondolieri* calls his attention to the legendary *palazzo Capello*, scene of one of the most famous love stories in the history of Venice. As the protagonist takes a closer look at the landmark, he sees the outline of a tall slim woman dressed in black standing near one of the windows. His vivid imagination makes him assume that she must also be mourning the death of a lover just like he is. For that simple reason he feels drawn to her almost immediately. At the same time, he is surprised—and almost shocked—to discover that he is actually feeling attracted to her. He had, after all, planned to remain faithful to the memory of his beloved wife for the rest of his life. Specially since he had always believed that true love can strike only once in a lifetime.

For the next two days and nights, the narrator is not able to chase away the vision of the unknown woman. At that point, in chapter 3, Altamirano includes a short observation with regard to the famous German romantic E.T.A. Hoffmann: "Diríase que tenía yo la visión fija en los ojos, como en los lentes del pobre enamorado de Hoffmann" (454). As will be discussed later, this is a direct reference to Hoffmann's tale "Der Sandmann", and probably also an allusion to at least two other of his stories, namely "Die Geschichte vom verlornen Spiegelbilde" from Die Abenteuer der Silvesternacht, and "Das öde Haus". Similar to other works (see the section on Julia, for example), Atenea includes quite early in the text a vague reference to a foreign work. The overall impact of these kinds of references on the text, though, is usually far more substantial than at first sight. They often seem to appear out of the blue, or are brought up in a rather casual way, without any immediately apparent reason for their presence. Furthermore, it usually takes a reader who is quite familiar with the author or work in question, to fully understand the connection of these references with the text.

Altamirano's last work *Atenea* is part of that same pattern. Even though the name "Hoffmann" as such appears only once early in the text, the pages that follow include a considerable number of elements typically present in Hoffmann's work. For example, the repeated use of expressions such as "madness", "magic", "confusion", "magnetism", and, specially the correlation that is established between these and the subject of love, confirms that Altamirano was well aware of this particular aspect of Hoffmann's narrative. The following, rather lengthy paragraph, helps to illustrate this point:

> Por fin, ¿qué era aquello que yo sentía? ¿*Amor o locura*? Para el amor era demasiado pronto y demasiado *raro*. El amor es hijo del hábito, decía yo; es preciso haber sido envuelto por la nube *magnética* que se desprende de la persona amada, para sentirse *preso y encadenado*. [...] En resumen, si esto no era *amor*, seguramente era *locura*. Mi pobre cerebro ocupado constantemente con un pensamiento solo; [...] Pero si era *locura*, ¿no era lo natural, puesto que también *en la locura hay lógica*, que se tradujese en el sentido de mi preocupación y de mi enfermedad moral? ¿Por qué, pues, la imagen antes adorada se había sumergido en el océano oscuro de mi memoria, y sólo surgía en él luminosa, tenaz y querida, la imagen entrevista ayer? [emphasis added]
>
> (*Obras literarias completas* 455-56)

Subjects such as madness, dreams, magnetism (i.e. the inexplicable "magnetic" attraction between strangers), the supernatural, and the exploration of the dark side of the human psyche, were very popular within the romantic circles, with the German romantics being at the forefront. E.T.A. Hoffmann included these and other topics in many of his works, particularly in the collection Nachtstücke herausgegeben von dem Verfasser der Fantasiestücke in Callot's Manier (1816/17). In the two Nachtstücke (as they will be called from now on) "Das öde Haus" and "Der Sandmann", the protagonists lose their sanity after falling madly in love with what turns out to be a portrait of a woman in the first story, and a doll in the second one. Both men had fallen victims to an illusion caused when they looked through certain optical instruments. The protagonist of "Das öde Haus" finds out later, after he has handed over his handmirror to his physician, that the image he saw was not more than the mirror reflection of a painting. The protagonist of "Der Sandmann", on the other hand, cannot be cured, but is instead driven to suicide by his dellusionary ideas.

And in "Die Geschichte vom verlornen Spiegelbilde" (published in 1814 in the collection Fantasiestücke in Callot's Manier), the protagonist who is introduced as a responsible and happily married husband and father, falls madly in love with a mysterious Italian woman who convinces him to give up his reflection. As others discover that he has no mirror image, he is forced to flee from town to town. All this happens during the protagonist's trip to Italy, and there seems to be no logical explanation—other than the remark: "Ist ja doch Italien das Land der Liebe" (343)—for the irrational behaviour of a man who had proclaimed his deep love for his wife just moments before meeting the mysterious Giulietta. In the case of Altamirano's Atenea, there are no supernatural or devilish forces involved, nonetheless the protagonist does feel a sudden and inexplicable attraction for a woman he has never seen or heard about before just hours after his arrival in Venice.

Hoffmann's recurrent use of optical instruments (eye glasses, mirrors, binoculars, magnifying glasses, etc.) was intended to draw attention to the fact that there could very well be different ways to perceive the world than those which society has deemed acceptable. In most of Hoffmann's works, those who do venture into different realms of reality often end up having to pay a very high price for their unusual experiences. Hoffmann depicted reality as composed of multiple layers. His works often explore how these different layers manifest themselves to the beholder, and whether the different dimensions of reality can ever coexist in harmony. According to Hoffmann, art was supposed to facilitate the succesful merging of these different spheres.

This whole interpretation of art and of reality does not exist in Altamirano. In the particular case of Atenea, Altamirano adopted a number of motifs commonly found in Hoffmann, but gave them a different interpretation. Altamirano uses words such a madness simply to increase the dramatic effect of his writing. The following paragraph shows how Altamirano used these expressions simply to add more power to his descriptions, and to make them more colorful. Altamirano was thus already resorting to the type of metaphors and symbolic language that would become the trademark of Latin American modernism:

> Es hermosa, eso sí, con esa hermosura que tiene algo de penetrante y de hechicero luego que se siente y que se ve. Diríase que una hermosura de esta clase exhala un aroma, que embriaga el alma, o más bien que está circuida de una atmósfera magnética que subyuga. [...] Atenea realmente era una maga fascinadora. (emphasis added)
>
> (Obras literarias completas 469)

Though it is true that the initial chapters of Atenea offer little more than the heartrending, melo-dramatic account of the protagonist's first encounters with the mysterious Atenea, written in the typical vein of the 19th century sentimental novel, the second part of the novel—or what is preserved of it—contains what José Luis Martínez describes as a "Socratic dialogue" on the subject of love ("Altamirano novelista" 16). In her letters to the narrator, Atenea defends her belief that love should be experienced on a purely ideal or platonic level, and that the lovers should sacrifice their earthly passion for each other for the eternal joy of being reunited later in heaven. This view about love was not only very popular with the romantic poets and novelists, but it figured prominently in the works of E.T.A. Hoffmann. The narrator of Atenea, on the other hand, is convinced that platonic love cannot exist in the "real" world, that love needs to have some sensual component if it wants to survive:

> El amor vive de los sentidos, ellos suministran su savia al árbol; ellos soplan el fuego de la hoguera. Sin ellos, el árbol se seca y la llama se extingue. [...] Y no quiero decir que sea necesario que el sensualismo en amor llegue al extremo, no. Basta que él mantenga su influjo físico lo suficiente para atar con él, como un lazo, esa cosa sin la cual todo muere y que se llama la esperanza. [...] Pues bien, Atenea, ¿habéis querido hablar de este amor ideal que no alimenta esperanzas y que no vive de los sentidos? [...] Es un amor absurdo y que no puede comprenderse.
>
> (Obras literarias completas 481)

The interesting aspect of this exchange between Atenea and the narrator is that instead of proving one theory right over the other, Altamirano tried to arrive at a viable definition of love that would incorporate elements from both currents. During the final paragraphs, the narrator explains to Atenea that the earthly love she despises is a necessary stage for the development of the ideal love she desires. The narrator uses his own experience to support his theory: "Fue amor del alma ése; amor que no se disipa, que vive en las ideas y que se arranca con la vida. [...] ¿Concederéis ahora que fue un amor ideal? Pero amor ideal que nació en los sentidos, que creció bajo su influjo, que allí desarrolló sus alas para volar a regiones superiores, [...]" (483). It is necessary to give Altamirano credit for his successful attempt at uniting two seemingly irreconcilable conceptions of love. It is something the romantic writers, including E.T.A. Hoffmann, in general never achieved since they continuously adhered to an extremely dualistic vision of love and of women.

* The present chapter showed that all of Altamirano's novels and short novels—with the exception of Antonia and Beatriz—contain references to specific German authors and/or their works. Each section of the chapter was dedicated to the analysis of a different narrative work. A total of seven works was studied, covering thus the whole body of Altamirano's known works of fiction. All the German references were highlighted, and an explanation was offered regarding the meaning of each of these references in connection to the particular work in which they appeared. Various factors were taken into account, including subject matter, characterization, literary style, setting, and/or narrative technique.

In the process it was discovered that the references to German (or German speaking) authors were limited to writers belonging to roughly the same epoch. The authors quoted were J.W. von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, Heinrich Zschokke, E.T.A. Hoffmann, and Heinrich Heine. Altamirano's need to mention Alexander von Humboldt on several occasions is evidence of the great respect and admiration he felt for this German writer, scientist and explorer, even though Humboldt's most influential (and popular) statements about Latin America were made in French. Taking into account the obstacles Altamirano had to contend with regarding the lack of proper editions and translations, his use of German references denotes a good understanding of the original sources. In line with what was said about Mexican literature in Chapter 1, and about Altamirano's literary agenda in Chapter 2, it was possible to show that Altamirano used these references for the fulfillment of his own goals. The foreign references do not wrest originality from his narrative, but rather serve to underline it. He borrowed without falling into the trap of imitation, managing thus to reconcile Europe's heritage with Mexico's newly emerging literary tradition.

Conclusion

The history of Mexico during the 19th century was one of turbulence and uncertainty. The war of independence confronted the country with the difficult task of finding a political, social, economic, and cultural identity of its own. This in itself brought on a further series of disagreements and armed conflicts which lasted for a good part of the 19th century. The constant political and social unrest was a significant obstacle in the development of Mexican culture. Nonetheless, it is in the tumultuous 19th century that we find the roots of 20th century Mexican art and literature. One of the men who played a stellar role in the search for Mexico's literary expression was Ignacio Manuel Altamirano. His main goal in life was to guide and support his fellow writers in the creation of a truly *Mexican* literature. For the first four decades after the achievement of independence, Mexico's literary production had relied heavily on European models. In the beginning this borrowing occurred in a more or less indiscriminate fashion, but as time went on two distinct tendencies began to emerge: there were those writers who continued to imitate, adapt, or even copy foreign works outright; and then there were those who, like Altamirano, decided to use the European works available to them merely as sources of inspiration for the production of original works which would ideally include a vast array of Mexican, not European, elements.

This meant that the great masterpieces of European literature were from then on to be emulated and not copied. Altamirano invited his contemporaries to actively pursue the study of foreign literatures (French, English, German, and Spanish literature in particular) with the purpose of identifying the elements of style, language, and subject matter that had given these works their high rank. Thanks to the initiative and efforts of Altamirano, the study of foreign literatures was approached for the first time in a conscious, systematic and organized fashion. Altamirano was himself an avid student of

European literature. Both his critical writings as well as his works of narrative fiction attest to his strong interest in the subject. Altamirano's command of the French language, and the relative abundance of French works and French translations available on the Mexican market, as well as the popularity of French literature on an international level explain Altamirano's initial predilection for French literature. The same holds true for the English authors Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott who were immensely popular at the time. Altamirano was particularly fond of the historical novel à la Scott since it reflected his own views regarding the socio-historical mission of the novel. It is less obvious, however, why he would have developed such a strong interest in Germany (to the extent that he would be antagonized by his own countrymen for his opinions about Germany's foreign policies), knowing that access to the language and to the original works of literature was more restricted than in the case of other foreign literatures.

Notwithstanding the opinions of others, Altamirano maintained that it was imperative for any country who desired to keep up with Germany's latest scientific and technological advances to become familiar with the German language. He also advocated the reading of German literature in either the original or in direct translation, since second or third-hand translations often distorted the true spirit of a work. Altamirano's political ideals played a considerable role in his admiration for Germany: his adherence to the principles of political liberalism made him take the side of Germany during the French-German war of 1871. Altamirano's critical comments are therefore not limited to Germany's literature, but they cover a variety of aspects, including the country's political situation, its history, the advanced state of its science, the accuracy of its language, as well as the contributions of the Germans living in Mexico. Altamirano first became acquainted with German literature during his teenage years as a student of Ignacio Ramírez ("El Nigromante"). His warm feelings for Germany were probably the result, at least in the beginning (as with many other Mexicans), of the admiration he felt for the explorer, scientist and writer Alexander von Humboldt.

Over the years, Altamirano became one of, if not the most active, promoter of German literature in Mexico. He was well acquainted with Germany's spiritual and literary tradition. He encouraged his contemporaries to study German as well as to produce their own translations, and he worked in close collaboration with German teachers, journalists, and printers residing in Mexico. He was directly responsible for the enthusiasm with which German literature was received in Mexico. Altamirano's profound knowledge of German letters, as well as his desire to share this knowledge with his contemporaries, had a direct impact on the type and amount of German literature that became known in Mexico during those years. Without his intervention, many of the German works which became known in Mexico at that time would not have made their début in Mexico at that particular point in history.

It is highly improbable, however, that German literature was known among Mexico's popular classes. Mexico's high levels of illiteracy, its geographical distance from Europe, language barriers and cultural barriers did not allow for a massive distribution of German works in the Mexican market. Only a select group of Mexicans had access to formal education, even fewer had occasion to study foreign languages and literatures. The promotion of German language and literature in Mexico was essentially the product of the efforts of a relatively small group of people. It was mostly thanks to the enthusiasm and hard work of individuals like Epstein, Hassey, Altamirano, Segura, and others that German literature received the degree of attention it did. It was in these circles, however, that German letters had the best chance of having an impact on Mexico's emerging writers. Altamirano's numerous articles and essays dealing with German literature, as well as the publication of numerous excerpts of German literature in his famous albeit short-lived journal El renacimiento were very effective vehicles for the dissemination of German literature among Mexico's cultivated classes.

Altamirano's love for German literature is apparent not only in his critical writings, but also in his works of narrative fiction. Of special interest is the fact that

Altamirano concentrated mostly on *romantic* writers and poets (with the exception of the German classics Goethe and Schiller, who nonetheless exhibit romantic traits in a number of their works, and who have therefore been received internationally as romantics). Not only does this strong inclination for romanticism reflect Altamirano's fondness of romantic subject matter and of its tendency to incorporate local color, but it also highlights Altamirano's affinity for the movement's liberal ideals and rebellious spirit. Altamirano's interest in a current literary phenomenon is further a reflection of his belief that a novel should include current or recent historical events only. He did not endorse the common European practice of writing about a distant past, nor did he see the novel as a medium to flee from reality. Quite on the contrary, he saw the act of writing as a way to contribute to the overall improvement of the political, social, and economic conditions of Mexico. His idea of a "national culture" envisioned a culture subordinated to the political needs of his country.

Altamirano's interest in German literature itself was also motivated by both political (or ideological) and literary considerations. So was the selection of the German authors and works he included in all but two of his works of narrative fiction. The reference to Schiller that appears in Julia, for example, serves to draw attention to the fact that liberty is the central theme of the work—provided, of course, that the reader is familiar with Schiller's reputation as "poet of liberty". By borrowing one of Schiller's literary "trademarks", Altamirano managed to confer upon his own text, from the very beginning, an air of prestige and respectability that would not have been that easy to attain otherwise. In fact, Altamirano included in the first chapter of Julia a self-reflexive remark about how the inclusion of famous names or quotations may serve to enhance the credibility of a particular work: "—Bien —repliqué[45]—; me convences, Julián, tanto más cuanto que has apoyado tus razones en poéticas citas que es necesario respetar" (Altamirano, Obras literarias completas 156).

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[45] This is the voice of the external narrator; he heard the story he is about to tell from the main character Julián.

La navidad en las montañas also used German language sources primarily for ideological rather than for artistic purposes. In this case Altamirano relied quite heavily on Heinrich Zschokke's novel Das Goldmacherdorf. There are many similarities in terms of characterization, plot, setting, and ideological background. This factor might almost be held against Altamirano who, it seems, got carried away by the admiration he felt for Zschokke. In adapting Zschokke's work for his own purposes, Altamirano forgot that his native Mexico was not a feasible candidate for the communal lifestyle portrayed in Das Goldmacherdorf. Apart from the fact that La navidad en las montañas is set during the war of Reform and that the landscape is described as containing typical Mexican features, the characters and events portrayed in Altamirano's novel have little in common with the psychological, historical, and philosophical makeup of the Mexican people.

The German references that appear in Las tres flores, Clemencia, El Zarco, and Atenea, on the other hand, were selected not so much for political or ideological reasons, but to fulfill certain literary and artistic expectations, specifically in the areas of setting, characterization, narrative structure, and subject matter. Altamirano's descriptions, particularly those of nature, were greatly influenced by the works of Alexander von Humboldt. In his extensive writings, often in French, Humboldt praised the imposing beauty and uncorrupted majesty of the Latin American subcontinent. Curiously, it required the view of a foreigner to make the Latin American people appreciate their natural and cultural heritage. Even though there are only two direct references to Humboldt in Altamirano's narrative work, the effect of Humboldt's admiration for Mexico can be perceived in the caring voice with which Altamirano described his beloved country. Altamirano's descriptions are intended to awake in his fellow countrymen feelings of pride and love for their homeland.

E.T.A. Hoffmann also went to great lengths to convey to the reader a factual picture of the physical surroundings that appear in his tales, but his events and characters often belong to an imaginary sphere. The result is a startling contrast between reality and fantasy. For this reason, and also because it is a well-known fact that the fully detailed description of actual localities is a characteristic feature of the historical novel, we should be cautious to draw any parallels between the descriptions of Hoffmann and Altamirano. It is quite obvious, on the other hand, that Altamirano did follow Hoffmann's example in terms of characterization and narrative structure. Hoffmann often used dual characters, or else created characters whose inner and outer qualities are so discordant that those around them have a hard time recognizing their true personalities.

The character pairs Manuela/Pilar and El Zarco/Nicolás in El Zarco, Clemencia/Isabel and Valle/Flores in Clemencia, and Julián/the Englishman in Julia, are very much conceived in the manner of Hoffmann's characters. Each pair consists of two individuals who are opposites in terms of their physical appearance, their personality and their conduct. All the while society is portrayed as gullible and easy to fool. Unable to look beneath outward appearances and formalities, society often treats the kind-hearted unfairly, while those whom destiny endowed with good looks or wealth are treated with respect and consideration regardless of their inner values. The failure of people and of society in general to recognize the true character of a person often leads to tragic outcomes in Altamirano's novels. Both Hoffmann and Altamirano believed that literature should be used as a vehicle for social criticism. In the particular case of Altamirano, he felt that it was his mission to teach people right from wrong.

Hoffmann was also renowned for the elaborate frame stories with which he adorned both his individual tales as well as his collections of tales. Altamirano's Julia, La navidad en las montañas, and Idilios y elegías (Memorias de un imbécil) contain simple, not very well developed frame stories—in the case of La navidad en las montañas the frame story takes up merely two sentences at the very end of the work, which makes it look as if it had been added at the last minute. The frame story included in Clemencia, on the other hand, is a fully integrated, well developed text. Its most interesting feature is that it contains two quotations taken from two separate tales of Hoffmann. Their function is to link the frame story with the nuclear story, and to round off the incidents described in the latter. An important difference between Hoffmann and Altamirano is that Hoffmann often used frame stories as a way to link the separate tales within his collections. Also, the characters and events described in his frame stories are usually not connected to the characters and events portrayed in the individual tales. Hoffmann used his frame stories as an arena for discussing the meaning of art and its role in everyday life. Altamirano, on the other hand, used them to make the events described in the nuclear stories appear as if they had actually taken place.

Our research indicated that among all the authors of German origin quoted by Altamirano, E.T.A. Hoffmann and Heinrich Zschokke played the most influential role in his works of narrative fiction. In second place came the dramas and poetry of Friedrich Schiller, and the writings of Alexander von Humboldt. The references to Johann von Goethe found in El Zarco are, on the contrary, not very relevant. They are used merely to enhance the dramatic effect of some of Altamirano's descriptions. That Altamirano did not rely more heavily on Goethe is probably related to the fact that he never entirely approved of Goethe's novel Die Leiden des jungen Werthers. The case of Heinrich Heine is a very interesting one: even though the name of Heine appears in Altamirano's critical writings but not in his works of fiction, it is almost certain (judging from the facts we were able to uncover) that Altamirano's early tale Las tres flores is an augmented and revised prose "translation" of Heinrich Heine's ballad "Die Romanze vom Rodrigo". Altamirano was, after all, right—at least in part—when he claimed that Las tres flores was a translation. We hope that the evidence gathered here may help to settle not only the question regarding the authorship of this work, but also the mystery surrounding its source(s).

In analizing all of Altamirano's known novels and novellas it becomes apparent that Altamirano applied great care in the selection of the particular German references he chose to include in his works. He was very organized and systematic in how he fitted the foreign material into his own works: every novel or novella contains usually quotations, references or allusions to only *one* major German author—with the exception of Alexander von Humboldt whose name crops up on different occasions—; also, all references are included not by accident, but are there to fulfill a very specific purpose or function. Altamirano did not simply imitate other authors' styles, or use foreign quotations to adorn his writing like some of his contemporaries, but he used them instead to highlight, underline, or enhance particular aspects of his own works. He knew that by backing up a certain idea with the words of a famous foreign author his own point of view would gain in credibility. Altamirano also used foreign references to create a certain atmosphere, and on occasion to anticipate future events.

As a closing remark we would like to remind the reader that Altamirano was one of those few gifted people who manage to rise from the most humble and disadvantaged of origins to a position of power that only few can dream of. Despite his Indian blood, Altamirano became one of the most respected members of Mexico's highest social, political and intellectual circles. All the same he never forgot his Indian heritage, but remained true in heart and spirit to his roots. He fought for a better school system in order to help children of indigenous background escape the life of hardship and ignorance typical of people of their class. His contributions to the development of Mexico's literature were invaluable, and so was his involvement in the political life of the country. Altamirano's participation in the major armed struggles during the 1850's and 1860's, as well as the several governmental positions he held throughout his life as member of the Congress, as attorney general of the Supreme Court, and as a diplomat, are evidence of his profound commitment to his country and its people, and of the awareness he had at all times of the latest developments and events affecting Mexico. This awareness is also a distinct feature of Altamirano's writings, whether in his political articles or in his works of fiction. Altamirano's biggest contribution to the development of the Mexican novel was undoubtedly—as José Luis Martínez pointed out in La expresión nacional—having convinced his contemporaries of the artistic dignity of "lo mexicano".

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